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The Ethnic Factor In the Soviet Armed Forces

S. Enders Wimbush, Alex Alexiev

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→ Data for this ~~band~~ report on the ethnic factor in the Soviet armed forces derive exclusively from interviews, conducted over a period of two years, with former Soviet servicemen. The interviewee sample is very diverse in terms of the nationalities represented, functional and social experience, and service branch. Through the interview process, the authors have sought to identify and characterize phenomena related to ethnic diversity in the Soviet armed forces. The authors have tried to identify and analyze specific trend lines where the data permit. Among the conclusions are: By 1995 between one-in-three and one-in-four members of the draftable cohort will come from a Muslim region of the USSR; the Soviet armed forces cannot be considered as environments conducive to the reduction of ethnic self-awareness and a reduction of animosity and tension between Soviet nationalities. Nearly all indicators suggest the opposite occurs; and the ethnic situation in the Soviet armed forces suggest existing or potential vulnerabilities that should receive the attention of U.S. military planners.

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The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces

S. Enders Wimbush, Alex Alexiev

March 1982



PREFACE

Data for this Rand report on the ethnic factor in the Soviet armed forces derive exclusively from interviews, conducted over a period of two years, with former Soviet servicemen. The interviewee sample is very diverse in terms of the nationalities represented, functional and social experience, and service branch. Through the interview process, the authors have sought to identify and characterize phenomena related to ethnic diversity in the Soviet armed forces. The study does not claim statistical reliability. Rather, the authors have tried to identify and analyze specific trend lines where the data permit.

The report should be of interest to specialists and intelligence consumers who analyze Soviet military behavior and capabilities, especially those interested in Soviet military manpower policies and practices.

SUMMARY

Sizable demographic shifts in the Soviet population, which favor the growth of Soviet Central Asian populations over those from the European regions of the USSR, will cause the Soviet leadership to reassess basic manpower utilization policies and practices in the next few decades. The Soviet armed forces, which traditionally have drawn most heavily from the Slavic populations of the Soviet state to man positions of authority, technological sophistication, and political sensitivity, now are beginning to be faced with the specter of a conscription cohort that increasingly must be drawn from the southern and eastern reaches of the Soviet Union, particularly from Soviet Turkic-Muslim populations. By 1995, between one-in-three and one-in-four members of the draftable cohort will come from a Muslim region of the USSR.

To identify and assess the kinds of problems such a shift will cause for Soviet military planners, we interviewed 130 former Soviet servicemen chosen from a wide range of nationalities, educational and functional backgrounds, and geographic regions. Without seeking statistical reliability, we attempted to characterize the importance of the ethnic factor in Soviet military thinking and to identify specific policies and practices related to nationality in Soviet military life.

The Soviet induction system is designed to ensure the proper ethnic balance in the different services, branches, and units. Most interviewees believe that the system functions under specific directives to structure the ethnic balance according to well-established criteria. A military authority, probably the General Staff, estimates the number of recruits needed by the individual services and branches. Then, on the basis of information provided by the local conscription offices (*voenkomats*), this authority determines the number and the profile of conscripts available from each *voenkomat*. Finally, it directs "buyers" from military districts or units to particular *voenkomats* to pick up a certain number of recruits from a specific profile, and in this manner matches demand and supply. Thus, by sending different buyers from the same formation to *voenkomats* in different parts of the USSR, military authorities are able to control the nationality mix. Bribery and corruption are prevalent among *voenkomat* officials, who often can assure assignment to a preferred location or choice unit.

The most prominent stationing principle is that of extraterritoriality—the stationing of soldiers away from their own ethnic regions of the USSR. Interviewees believed that this practice is primarily a security precaution: If stationed in the same area as their ethnic kin, soldiers might be inclined to side with the local population against the Russian authorities during serious internal crises or unrest. The exception to the extraterritoriality rule is the stationing of construction battalion soldiers in their native territories. Apparently, no national units exist at this time. There appears to be a conscious effort to isolate servicemen from local populations, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia, where most soldiers are discouraged, even prevented, from mixing with the natives.

There are major and evidently planned ethnic differentials in the ethnic mix in different services and branches. The most dramatic difference in ethnic ratios among draftees can be observed between combat and noncombat units. Combat units are staffed by a clear majority of soldiers from the Slavic nationalities, usually 80 percent or more. Noncombat units usually contain 70 to 90 percent or more non-Slavs, especially Central Asians and Caucasians. Non-Slavs who serve in combat units often are relegated to support roles, such as in the kitchen or in the warehouses. Among the factors said to contribute to this stark dichotomy in the

ethnic composition of combat and noncombat units are the non-Slavs' insufficient education, language incompetence, and perceived disloyalty.

Internal Security Forces units, used primarily in penal institutions and for security duties and general internal security functions, contain large numbers of Central Asians and Caucasians, perhaps as high as 50 to 60 percent of the overall force. Respondents who served in these units indicated that the large concentrations of non-Slavs was part of a well-thought-out policy of exploiting ethnic animosities for the regime's purposes.

Noncommissioned officers are of two types: those who are serving their obligatory term in the military and who have been promoted to the rank of sergeant and career NCOs who remain in the military on extended service. In the first category, the majority are Slavs, but many non-Slavic servicemen can and often are promoted to the rank of junior sergeant depending on the immediate requirements of their particular unit. A somewhat different policy is practiced in the construction battalions. In these units there are many non-Slavic sergeants, who are promoted without any special training or preparation and are put in charge of work teams composed of coethnics. In some cases, their only qualification is a fair command of the Russian language.

In the second category, most NCOs are Slavs, with the surprising finding that Eastern Ukrainians probably constitute a proportion of the career NCO corps far in excess of their proportional representation in either the military or in the general population.

The Soviet officer corps is ethnically Slavic with an overwhelming Russian majority. Minorities are dramatically underrepresented in officer training programs and military institutes.

Preinduction military training functions less effectively and on a much reduced scale in non-Slavic regions of the USSR. DOSAAF¹ activities clearly are more limited both in kind and in scope in non-Slavic regions than in the Slavic regions. Access to in-service technical training appears to be limited to those recruits who have a firm command of the Russian language. Both from choice and because of educational deficiencies, non-Slavs—especially Central Asians and other Muslim peoples—enroll in military academies at an insignificant rate, although there is some evidence that something akin to affirmative action may be used to encourage enrollment in some cases.

Some evidence indicates that non-Slavs serving in combat units receive less actual weapons training than Slavs. In construction units, soldiers seldom, if ever, receive military training of any kind.

Russian language comprehension among non-Slavic servicemen is very uneven. Many conscripts enter service with no previous ability to communicate in the Russian language. A "Russian only" rule applies in formation but cannot be enforced out of formation. Most non-Russian soldiers use their own languages when not engaged in supervised military activities. Although most materials used in a unit are by decree in Russian, there was no mention of Russian language classes for non-Russian speakers.

After about one year, non-Russians learn to function in "kitchen Russian," meaning that they can understand and respond to basic, uncomplicated commands. Dissimulation—pretending not to understand Russian as a means of avoiding duty—is widespread and poses a significant problem for commanders.

Contrary to Soviet propaganda claims, the Soviet armed forces fail to foster a spirit of brotherhood among the diverse peoples of the USSR. Rather, the opposite often occurs: Ser-

¹The Voluntary Organization for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force, and Navy.

vicemen leave the military with a heightened sense of their own ethnic self-awareness and increased misgivings about Russian domination. While serving, soldiers generally band together with members of their own ethnic group, thereby reducing their contact with other groups and individuals.

Racism is a dominant feature of the relationship between Slavs and nonwhite non-Slavs, especially Central Asians and other Turkic-Muslim peoples. In high-technology units, racism is less of a problem because of the low concentrations of non-Slavs in these units. In the Soviet armed forces, racial segregation has both social and functional manifestations and appears to be matter of fact.

More than half of the interview sample participated in, witnessed, or knew of someone who had engaged in violence stemming from ethnic conflict. Ethnic violence appears most prevalent in combat units of the Ground Forces, where small concentrations of non-Slavs face large concentrations of Slavs. Construction units, with a high percentage of non-Slavs to Slavs, seem to experience less ethnic conflict than combat units. High-technology units experience very little ethnic unrest. Officers routinely avoid becoming involved in ethnic conflict for fear of having their service records blemished.

Non-Russians have fewer nationality-inspired conflicts among themselves than do Slavs against non-Slavs. Respondents observed some conflict, however, between Balts and Central Asians and between such Turkic-Muslim groups as Uzbeks and Chechens. Traditional animosities between Georgians and Armenians are also observed.

Fighting between representatives of the local population and soldiers from nearby military units is a common phenomenon in the USSR as it is in many countries. Hostility by Slavic populations toward Central Asian soldiers is often encountered, particularly in rural areas. Conversely, Slavic soldiers are often treated condescendingly by urban non-Slavs, for instance, in the Baltics and the Caucasus.

Two main conclusions spring from this research. First, the Soviet armed forces cannot be considered as environments conducive to the reduction of ethnic self-awareness and a reduction of animosity and tension between Soviet nationalities. Nearly all indicators suggest that precisely the opposite occurs. Second, the ethnic situation in the Soviet armed forces suggests existing or potential vulnerabilities that should receive the attention of U.S. military planners. Using these results, one can postulate a series of short-term and long-term force effectiveness hypotheses.

Ethnic problems in the Soviet armed forces should not be overstated on the basis of this research, but neither should they be ignored. It is clear from the evidence gathered from former Soviet servicemen that Soviet military and nonmilitary authorities face a sizable challenge in the next decade to try and integrate non-Slavic personnel into a multinational and technologically sophisticated military environment. Several alternatives for dealing with the growing ethnic imbalance may be open to Soviet authorities. However, current Soviet ethnic practices in the armed forces, examined in this study, reflect some deeply held attitudes, perceptions, and objectives rooted in the historical experience of the Soviet regime and are thus unlikely to undergo any quick or radical changes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A study of this kind cannot be conducted without the assistance of many individuals. None contributed as much as the former Soviet servicemen who willingly agreed to share their experiences and understandings of the Soviet military system with us. To them we offer our sincere thanks. To those who volunteered their knowledge but whose contributions, for a variety of reasons, could not be accommodated within the realm of this research, again our thanks. There will be other times and other studies.

Susan L. Curran oversaw the compilation of data, its storage and presentation, and served as the project's administrator in addition to her regular and excellent contributions of a more substantive nature. Her important and timely assistance made analysis easier and more enjoyable.

Edmund D. Brunner, Jr., James H. Hayes, and Alexandre Bennigsen made substantial contributions to the project through their assessments at each stage of the research.

Vladimir Goldgor, Lubov F. Wong, and Dmitry Ponomareff assisted in developing the data base and made important methodological and substantive suggestions.

Konrad Kellen and A. Ross Johnson wrote comprehensive prepublication critiques of the completed manuscript with many valuable suggestions for improving it. Ross also graciously put his extensive experience with interview research, particularly suggestions for handling the large amounts of interview data, at the disposal of our research team.

Helen P. Barnes and Sandra F. Dougharty prepared the many drafts leading to this report with great skill, poise, and without losing their good humor over the seemingly inherent caprice of the human condition.

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GLOSSARY

The following list defines derogatory terms of an ethnic nature used frequently in the Soviet armed forces:

ARMENIN	Russian for "Armenian." When used toward Caucasians other than Armenian, that is, Azerbaidzhanis and Georgians, it is a derogatory term suggesting effeminateness or homosexuality.
ARMIASHKA	Literally, "little Armenian"; used pejoratively.
CHERNOZHOP(Y)	Literally, "black asses"; used pejoratively like the English term "nigger." The expression can refer to Armenian, Georgian, and Azerbaidzhani Caucasians, but usually to Central Asians.
CHUCHMEK	Literal translation unknown; used like <i>churka</i> as a racial epithet aimed at Central Asians.
CHURKA	Literally, "a wood chip"; a pejorative term meant to imply that the object is worthless, intellectually slow, or simply dumb. It refers mainly, if not exclusively, to Central Asians and other "Asiatics."
CUKE	Literally, "pig, swine" in Latvian; used toward Russians.
EVREICHIK	Literally, "little Jew"; has a pejorative connotation.
FASCIST	Used by Russians toward Soviet Germans and Nordic-looking Balts.
KATSAP	Origin unknown; pejorative for ethnic Russians; used by Lithuanians, Poles, and West Ukrainians.
KATSO	In Georgian, means "friend, comrade." When used by a non-Georgian, it is a slur against Georgians.
KHOKHOL	Literally, "tuft of hair forming a top-knot"; used by Russians pejoratively to denote stupidity and stubbornness in Ukrainians. When used between Ukrainians, no pejorative meaning is intended.
KITAITSI	Literally, "Chinese"; used in the derogatory meaning of "chinks" to denote Soviet Asiatics.
KOSOGLAZYI	Literally, "slant eyes"; used to refer to Soviet "Asians" in the same way it is used elsewhere.
KURAT	A contemptuous term for Russians in Estonia.
MAKARONIK	Literally, "macaroni men"; used by Russians to denote military career-seeking Ukrainians, who, in the course of many years' service, strive to acquire military rank stripes, commonly referred to as "macaroni."
MOSKAL	Literally, "Muscovite"; derogatory term for all ethnic Russians; used by West Ukrainians, Poles, and some Balts.
NATSMEN	Contraction of <i>national'nye men'shestva</i> (national minorities). This term carries an historic loading from the days of the Bolshevik revolution when non-Russians, and particularly those who sought greater autonomy under or independence from the Russian rule, were thought of more

or less as colonials who had to be brought back into line. The term still carries the connotation of "colonial."

PLOSKOMORDYI Literally, "flat snout"; highly insulting term for Soviet Orientals.
ZHID Like "yid"; connoting "dirty Jew."
ZHOPOMORDYI Literally, "ass face"; perhaps the most insulting epithet used for Central Asians.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE POPULATION

The USSR is the last of the great multinational empires. Within its borders live approximately 262 million (as of 1979) inhabitants of whom about half are non-Russians. These non-Russians come from more than one hundred distinct nationalities, nearly one hundred of whom employ their own distinct languages.¹ Religiously and culturally, non-Russians are equally diverse, embracing Eastern Orthodoxy, Eastern Catholicism, Catholicism, Lutheranism, Sunnite and Shiite Islam, Judaism, Ismailis (Nazarit), Armenian Gregorians, Buddhists, Buddhist-Lamaites, Nestorian Christians, and animists.

Obviously, the cohort from which Soviet military manpower requirements must be drawn reflects this diversity; it is not a homogeneously Slavic, let alone Russian, mass. Yet, for historical reasons, Russian and Soviet military planners alike have relied primarily on Russian and other Slavic peoples (Ukrainians, with the exceptions noted below, and Belorussians) to man and staff both the pre- and post-1917 armed forces.² For centuries, this policy has proved sufficient, as the number of available Slavs and the few trusted others have been greater than military manpower demand. But this favorable situation is changing rapidly.

The USSR is in the throes of substantial demographic change that can be characterized as a shift in population growth from the western, European, and mainly Slavic regions of the country to the southern and southeastern, Asiatic, and mainly Turkic-Muslim regions. For example, while the major Slavic groups (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians) grew by 19 percent (from 159 to 189 million) in the period 1959-1979, the remaining non-Russians grew by 47 percent, with the main Turkic and Iranian peoples of Central Asia (Uzbeks, Tadzhiks, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, and Turkmen) showing a growth rate of nearly 100 percent during this same period.

According to a recent Rand companion report,³ this differential in growth rates between the European and the Asian parts of the USSR is resulting in significant changes in the age structures of the regions. The Slavic populations are becoming older; Soviet Asian populations, conversely, are becoming younger, with all the implications this has for the draftable manpower cohort. The study concludes:

- Ethnic Russians now (as of 1980) appear to comprise less than half of the 18-year-old male cohort and by 1995 will comprise 46 percent of the total.
- The percentage of ethnic Russians and their fellow Slavs (Ukrainians and Belorussians) taken together will fall from 67 percent of the cohort in 1980 to 62 percent in 1995.

¹A number of language families are represented: Indo-European, which includes the Slavic, Baltic, Romance, Iranian, and Teutonic tongues; Ural-Altaic, which encompasses the Turkic languages of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Upper Volga regions, as well as the Mongolian and Finnic tongues; Caucasian, which can be broken into south, northwestern, and northeastern subdivisions; Semitic, which includes the languages of Soviet Assyrians and Central Asian Arabs; and Sinic, which includes the language of the Dungans, the Han Muslims the USSR shares with the People's Republic of China.

²These policies, which characterize Soviet treatment of national minorities in uniform to this day, are explained and analyzed in a companion report in this series by Susan L. Curran and Dmitry Ponomareff, *Managing the Ethnic Factor in the Russian and Soviet Armed Forces: An Historical Overview*, The Rand Corporation, R-2640/1, forthcoming.

³Edmund Brunner, Jr., *Soviet Demographic Trends and the Ethnic Composition of Draft Age Males, 1980-1995*, The Rand Corporation, N-1654/1, February 1981.

- Muslim-Turkic peoples comprise the only group for which the percentages of 18-year-old males in the Soviet total will increase—from 23.5 percent in 1980 to 28.7 percent in 1995.
- The Muslim-Turkic group is also the only one that will gain in its share of the total population of the Soviet Union in this period, as all other groups will lose in relative strength.
- The number of 18-year-old males will reach a low point of 2.15 million in 1985 but will increase thereafter to 2.32 million in 1995. The number of Russian draft-age males will also increase slightly from 1985 to 1995 but their percentage of the Soviet total will continue to decline.
- Although the number of Muslim-Turkic draft-age males will increase steadily from 1980 through 1985, their percentage of the Soviet total will reach a peak of 28.9 percent in 1990 and will remain at this figure in 1995.⁴

Thus, by 1995, between one-third and one-fourth of the draftable cohort will come from a Muslim region of the USSR. Against these gains, Russian and Slavic manpower will increasingly comprise a smaller and smaller part of the draftable cohort.

RESEARCH APPROACH

An earlier study presented some of our preliminary research findings.⁵ Here, we seek to update these findings, add depth where it is required, make corrections, present new material, and draw conclusions. We believe that our data provide new and important facts about the Soviet armed forces that are not available elsewhere and suggest the need for further research of this kind; help to confirm views more commonly held about the structure and function of the Soviet military; and, occasionally, contradict existing analyses and accepted facts.

The Soviet media seldom speak of the armed forces of the Soviet Union as other than the ideal milieu in which a distinctly Soviet consciousness is forged among the diverse nationalities. Occasionally, one can glimpse a certain uneasy candor to the effect that, while the armed forces allegedly still have a profound influence on the "international" instincts of the Soviet peoples, ethnic issues continue to require official attention. Generally, however, we have found Soviet media of little help in developing a data base or a framework for analysis of ethnic issues in the Soviet armed forces.⁶

⁴Ibid., pp. 20, 24.

⁵S. Enders Wimbush and Alex Alexiev, *The Ethnic Factor in the Soviet Armed Forces: Preliminary Findings*, The Rand Corporation, N-1486/1, May 1980.

⁶Of interest to analysts who employ more traditional research methods is Rand's multiyear comparative study of the role of the media in intra-elite communications in Communist countries. The project, directed by A. Ross Johnson, emphasizes the study of the process by which politically significant material appears in Communist-country media. The study tests the validity of the usual Kremlinological assumption that the media of the USSR or other Communist countries are used as an instrument of power struggle and policy debate by contending leaders and groups. It seeks to establish the degree to which and the circumstances under which partisan views of particular readers, groupings, or institutions may find expression in the controlled media. The principal data base of the study is information obtained from extended interviews with émigrés formerly involved in the media process—as writers, journalists, editors, censors, and government and Party officials. In contrast with the many studies based on content analysis alone, and in an effort to test the often unexamined assumptions of content-analysis studies, the Rand project used this data base to examine the structure and process of Communist media; the study focuses on the medium in the expectation that this will enhance the analyst's ability to interpret its message.

Large-scale Soviet emigration to the West in recent years has offered us a window on the societal, institutional, and personal dimensions of Soviet life from individuals who witnessed it firsthand. Seeking to take advantage of this unique information source two years ago, our research team undertook to interview former Soviet servicemen living outside of the USSR about their overall military experience and particularly about the significance of the ethnic factor in the Soviet armed forces. To date, we have interviewed 130 individuals, who were selected for interview from a pool of nearly four hundred. See Table 1.

Table 1
INTERVIEWEE SAMPLE^a

<i>Nationality</i>		<i>Branch of Service</i>	
Jew ^b	77	Ground Forces (CB ^c = 13)	72
Russian	31	Navy (CB = 2)	11
Ukrainian	7	Air Force (CB = 1)	18
Latvian	3	Antiaircraft	11
Armenian	3	SRF ^d (CB = 1)	7
Lithuanian	2	MVD ^e	4
Estonian	1	Border Forces	2
Georgian	1	KGB/Signal Corps	2
German	1		
Kirghiz	1		
Turkmen	1		
Crimean Tatar	1		
Chechen	1		
Total	130 ^f		
Enlisted	91		
Officers	36		

^aEight interviewees who served in World War II continued service for some time thereafter and have been included in this count.

^bThe sample consists of 64 Slavic Jews, 9 Bukharan Jews from Central Asia, 3 Mountain Jews (Tats) from Daghestan, and one Georgian Jew.

^cCB = Construction Battalion.

^dSRF = Strategic Rocket Forces.

^eMVD = Internal Security Forces.

^fThree of these interviewees did not perform military service but had relevant experiences and information.

Each interview was conducted with the special experiences of the interviewee in mind. In no case did we administer questionnaires or any other device designed to elicit quantifiable responses from our interviewees. Ours is not a statistical study; at this stage we are not seeking statistical reliability. Indeed, we question if such an approach is a viable alternative for the future, because of the complexity of the issue, disparities between Western and Soviet military concepts and practices, and the nature of the interviews themselves. Rather, our approach has been (1) to determine if an ethnic problem exists in the Soviet armed forces; (2) to define the nature and characteristics of the problem if one is identified; and (3) to analyze our findings in light of current and future Soviet manpower requirements and operational principles.

In lieu of a statistical approach, in which the interviewee would be asked to select from a series of responses chosen in advance, our interviews covered a number of broadly defined issue areas that included:

- Recruitment
- Stationing practices
- Preinduction military and nonmilitary training
- In-service military and nonmilitary training
- Language training and language use
- Ethnic composition of forces
- Ethnic relations in the armed forces

Interviews were in-depth, ranging from two to eight hours. We adopted a free-flowing interview format to take advantage of an interviewee's special knowledge or experience. Importantly, when an interviewee provided information about which we had little or no previous knowledge—a common occurrence—we were able to pursue these new lines of inquiry immediately. All interviews were conducted in Russian, or an ethnic language.

Some readers will assume that a project of this kind has inherent biases. Although we are aware of this possibility and, as noted below, have taken steps to minimize the effect of bias on our results, we believe that the burden of proof lies elsewhere. We remain unconvinced, and, indeed, our evidence strongly indicates the contrary, that firsthand participants are incapable of recalling and assessing their personal experiences objectively because, for example, "they chose to leave the USSR and therefore can have nothing good to say about it" or because "so many are Jewish." To treat only these two objections, which the authors have encountered numerous times in the past two years, *it is important to understand that on matters of fact responses from interviewees have been remarkably consistent across the entire spectrum of national affiliation and service experience.* Indeed, the generalizations advanced in this study are agreed to by the overwhelming majority of our interviewees. When significant differences of opinion or fact occur, we note them. In most cases, our respondents unanimously support our findings.

In a similar vein, we have been unable to isolate a distinctive "Jewish point of view" from the rest of our sample.⁷ Even if this were a demonstrable bias, our sample largely avoids the problem, in that approximately 40 percent of those interviewed are not Jews. In fact, although Jews in the Soviet armed forces are the victims of discrimination and are subjected to various degrees of anti-Semitism, they often are spared abuse of a racial or cultural nature. They also seem to enjoy somewhat broader service opportunities than, for example, Uzbeks or Georgians, and this greater variety of military-related experience seems to undermine whatever homogeneity of viewpoint might be present under other conditions.

We have been told that Soviet émigrés "will tell you anything," that is, they tend to exaggerate, and that "they tell you what you want to hear." Again, we know of no body of scientific evidence to sustain these claims and, hence, are inclined to give the benefit of doubt to our interviewees. However, we do recognize that exaggeration can occur. One important guard against interviewee exaggeration is the trained interviewer, for which there is no substitute. All of our interviews were conducted by individuals with extensive training and

⁷It should be noted that Soviet Jews are by no means a homogeneous group. For instance, the Bukharan Jews of Central Asia or the Tat Jews of the Northern Caucasus are much closer in terms of attitudes and experience and even racially to the Central Asians and Mountaineer tribesmen, respectively, than to the Russian Jews.

experience in Soviet affairs and with an unusually rich preparation in Soviet nationality issues. On one hand, the skilled interviewer and analyst can ferret out exaggeration where and when it occurs. On the other hand, we are convinced our interviewees for the most part were wisely inclined against exaggeration for fear that the interviewer would know better. In any case, as noted above, the consistency of responses across the entire interviewee spectrum rules out excessive exaggeration to our satisfaction.

To offset any possible bias in the sample, our interviews were conducted with an eye toward uncovering fact rather than opinion or analysis. Where the latter reasonably could be asked for, for example, the assessment by a junior officer of the abilities of his troops, we have so noted.

In sum, we remain confident that our findings will stand up to more detailed analysis, when and if the resources for such analysis become available. Furthermore, we believe that émigré interviewing could be adapted more widely to address research questions of this kind. Whatever the inherent limitations in this approach, émigré interviewing offers a meaningful view of the Soviet world that can stand as an important contrast or complement to other views generated by other research methods. At the very least, we believe it reasonable to assume that information provided by émigrés, who possess firsthand experience of Soviet military life at all levels of activity, is no less credible than that generated by more traditional content analysis of Soviet media.

II. MANAGING THE ETHNIC FACTOR IN MILITARY RECRUITMENT

Recruiting practices in the Soviet armed forces are determined by two major factors: the principle of universal conscription and the desire to achieve an ethnic balance conducive to the establishment of key military and political objectives of the Soviet Army. The Soviet population is made up of more than one hundred nationalities with diverse racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds; and the core Russian nationality, around which the army is built, represents only slightly over 50 percent of the total Soviet population. By definition, therefore, recruitment is a complex task. The actual processes of induction to ensure a desirable ethnic mix in the various services, branches, and individual units are carried out by an intricate induction system.

The most important induction and recruitment functions in the system are performed by a network of military commissariats (*voenkومات*), which are set up at every administrative level from the republic down to the city district. Although the *voenkomat* is not exclusively a recruiting and induction office (being charged with a variety of other functions), it is by far the most important organ in the system. Nominally, the *voenkomat* is under the general jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Defense (MND) and the Main Political Administration (MPA), although the actual chain of command leads to the Soviet General Staff by way of the commander of the military district.

According to our respondents, the *voenkومات* are staffed primarily by active duty officers, although evidently they contain significant numbers of retired military personnel and civilians. Interviewees who had served in earlier years recall that in the 1950s and early 1960s retired officers made up the majority of *voenkomat* officials, but later on were gradually replaced by younger career officers. Most of the *voenkomat* officers appear to be Russian, but there is considerable evidence that many offices in Central Asia and the Caucasus also employ officers of the native nationality.¹ This appears to be the case particularly in small towns. In general, service in the *voenkomat* is said to be highly desirable and sought after. Two reasons are given. First, officers serving in this office are spared the rigors of military life in the field and can enjoy life in an urban environment. Second, for those willing to take the risk, a *voenkomat* position provides the opportunity to earn considerable sums of money through bribes and corruption.

The main task of the *voenkomat* is to ensure the smooth functioning of the induction process by supplying the various services, branches, and units of the armed forces with recruits of the desirable physical, educational, political, and ethnic profile. For this purpose, every *voenkomat* maintains extensive dossiers on all induction-age youth in the area under its jurisdiction.² Included in the dossier is all available information on the youth's ethnic, social, and political background; school record; health data; and character references. This file is periodically updated and travels with the recruit to his final destination in the military, where it is kept in the "special section" (*osoboy otdel*) run by the unit's KGB

¹It should be noted that it is often difficult to distinguish among the three main Slavic nationalities on the basis of name alone, and impossible on the basis of physical features. Thus, the respondents may fail to differentiate between Slav and Russian.

²The dossiers of youths studying at institutes and universities are kept at the military department of the respective institution.

(Russian Secret Police) representative. Armed with these data, and following instructions from Moscow on the number of recruits necessary, the *voenkomat* is able to decide, on the basis of some general criteria, in which service or branch of service a recruit will serve. For example, intelligent youths with good educational records and spotless political backgrounds are sent to the Air Force, or to the Strategic Rocket Forces (SRF); less intelligent but physically strong recruits are earmarked for the Navy; while people with questionable political backgrounds or those with criminal records, insufficient education, and poor health as a rule end up in the construction battalions and other auxiliary units.

Official guidelines used by military authorities to determine the nationality composition of particular units are unclear, but almost all of our interviewees are convinced that there are specific instructions governing the conscription of non-Russians. Several have handled or seen directives related to national composition. A former high-ranking Soviet staff officer noted, for example, that as early as World War II there were specific sections within the *voenkomats* that were charged with dealing strictly with nationality-related issues in close cooperation with military counterintelligence and the KGB. According to this officer, during the war minorities were dealt with on the basis of a special top-secret decree, which he had access to, and which he described as follows:

In late 1941, or at the beginning of 1942, there was a top-secret decree of the Council of Labor and Defense about service by non-Russians, which was formulated by a special directive of the Supreme Soviet. It was entitled "Concerning the Principle of Staffing in the Soviet Armed Forces," and the decree went something like this: "The war that has just begun has demonstrated that not all Soviet nations have similar fighting abilities. Certain units have been defeated, due to the fact that the nations forming the majority in them have poor fighting abilities." The last item in the directive noted that Central Asians had proved "completely unreliable" as far as their fighting abilities were concerned and were not very useful in any military respect.

According to the same officer, another regulation stated that units should consist of a majority of the core Slavic nations and only small percentages of the "unstable nations." Reportedly, there were some exceptions to this directive, with occasional individual units having a majority of non-Slavs. Nonetheless, this differentiated approach to the ethnic factor in the Soviet military is consistent historically with Russian and Soviet practice.

Whether similar restrictions on non-Russian soldiers continue to be enforced in the Soviet Army today cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty. However, all of our respondents believe that restrictions of this kind remain in force, based on their own experiences and observations. The following comment is typical:

The government is always worried about the national composition in army units and makes sure that certain nationalities occupy certain positions in the military establishment. Special proportions are maintained in this respect, and they cannot afford to let things happen in a haphazard way.

In some cases, outright exclusion of minority soldiers is apparently possible. One respondent, a former political officer, had seen a secret directive dealing with the recruitment of soldiers for a Moscow division charged with protecting government premises in case of emergency. It specified that only Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians who were Komsomol or Communist Party members were to be drafted into this division.

Many respondents expressed their conviction that special numerical quotas on the acceptable share of minorities are established for the different services and branches. In one case, a former junior officer claimed to know of a regulation limiting to 5 percent the share of non-Russians in the Soviet Air Force.

The actual distribution of recruits and a desirable ethnic balance in particular units are

achieved through the services of another peculiar Soviet institution—which interviewees referred to as the military buyer (*pokupatel'*). The military buyer is simply an officer whose task is to receive recruits from the *voenkomat*. The buyer can originate either from an individual unit or from a military district, with orders to pick up a certain number of recruits of a specific profile. If the buyer is from a military district and has orders to receive a large number of inductees, he may take them first to a central distribution point, from which they are claimed by buyers from individual units. A method often used, recalled several respondents, is to load a large number of inductees on a specially composed train traveling in a predetermined direction and have them claimed by buyers from military units along the way. In some cases, the conscripts are first sent to training centers to undergo initial military training and only afterward picked up by the buyers. A former Navy officer asserted that this was the standard procedure in his service. The most common method of recruitment by far, however, involves assembling draftees at special collection centers where, under the supervision of military personnel, they wait for buyers to claim them. The wait can last from a few hours to a week or longer. Once "bought," the recruits are transported to the unit in which they are to serve in the company of the buyer. Characteristically, they are not told the unit's location until they arrive at their final destination.

From top to bottom, the mechanism of the Soviet induction system may be summarized as follows: A central military authority, probably the General Staff, estimates the number of recruits needed by the individual services and branches. Then, on the basis of information provided by the *voenkomats*, this authority determines the number and the profile of conscripts available from each *voenkomat*. Finally, it directs buyers from military districts or units to particular *voenkomats*, and in this manner matches demand and supply. Thus, by sending different buyers from the same formation to *voenkomats* in different parts of the Soviet Union, military authorities are able to control the nationality mix. For example, it is logical that the *voenkomats* in Uzbekistan contain a much higher proportion of non-Russians than the *voenkomats* in Smolensk.

This system of "buying" recruits from various regions of the USSR also explains why within individual units, in which the required ratio of core nationalities to minorities is achieved, very often one can find small microconcentrations of particular ethnic groups, who have been "bought" from the same geographic region and probably from the same *voenkomat*. This would explain why, according to our respondents, in units with a large proportion of Slavs—say, 80 to 90 percent—the minorities might represent only one or two different non-Russian groups, rather than a more diversified mix. The buyer system also allows authorities to draft people of different nationalities, not including the core group, for the same unit in consecutive years.

In most cases, the buyers are provided with instructions only regarding the number and profile of desired draftees, and they select the specific individuals from the available people at the collection point by examining their files. Ethnicity considerations are always an important part of the choice. A former noncommissioned officer who served once as an assistant buyer remembers being told to select a certain number of recruits with skills suitable for the communications troops, but warned unofficially not to pick any *churkas* (pejorative for Central Asians; see Glossary) regardless of qualifications.

If the system malfunctions, which occasionally happens, an adequate ethnic balance can be achieved by transferring part of the unit's personnel to another location. For example, a former sergeant serving with the SRF near Leningrad recalled that during his second year of service his unit was sent a number of conscripts of German origin, apparently by mistake. After several days, when their ethnic background was discovered, they were promptly trans-

ferred. Mistakes of this kind can happen, according to our respondents, even though military identity cards, which state the nationality of the individual, are issued by the *voenkomat*.

As noted above, recruits are not told where they will serve until they ultimately arrive at their units or until they receive some other indication from the accompanying military buyer. The following comments are typical:

Voenkomats never tell anyone where they will be assigned or what unit they will be in. One only finds out when the buyer arrives from the unit.

Orders dealing with where one will serve are so secret that even connections will not help you find out. A friend of my family worked in the *voenkomat*, and he tried to find out where I was going. He came back with the information that we were being sent to a high frequency communications unit, which turned out to be totally incorrect. Only when my group arrived did I learn that we were to be in the KGB Border Forces.

I figured out that I would be in the Air Force because of the tags the buyer was wearing. But no one would tell us until we actually arrived there. Everything was kept very secret.

We were put on a train and told we were going to Odessa to serve in artillery units. When we reached the Golta station, we were then informed that we would be serving in the SRF near Pervomaik. This happened about a half hour before we arrived there.

Respondents noted that they were not only accompanied by the buyer but often by several sergeants during the entire trip from their *voenkomats* or collection points to their units. Several advanced explanations such as the following:

Perhaps the reason the sergeants would not tell the recruits where they were going and why they stuck so closely to them is because they have had cases where people ran away even after they had been put on the train for their unit. People often run away like this when they learn that they are going to serve in some remote area.

A former political officer, who often accompanied buyers to receive their recruits, notes that the problem of new conscripts running away, especially in the non-Slavic areas, is a real one. He recalls, for example:

In Azerbaidzhan, our officers often had to encircle the train in order to keep the relatives of the recruits away. Time and again, relatives took recruits from the railway cars and ran away with them. They were not always caught and brought back. They would go up in the mountains and no one could find them. Similarly, I witnessed natives in the Komi region steal their relatives from the conscription trains and head for the taiga.

More serious in nature is the apparent ability of some youths to delay conscription by a variety of means. This is reported to be particularly true of Central Asians and Caucasians who, as a result, are often older when finally drafted than other recruits. For example:

The majority of the *churkas* in my MVD [Internal Security Forces] unit were considerably older than the Slavs, probably because they had managed to stay away from the draft for awhile. Many were three to five years older than the Slavs. Slavs were drafted at 19, while these minorities managed to stay away until at least 24. Maybe they just refused to report to the *voenkomat* when ordered.

Many Caucasians were older than induction age. They were smart guys and managed to avoid the draft for a certain period of time. Some were well over 20, and a couple who served in my company were already 27, the oldest you can be and still be drafted.

Nearly all the people in my construction battalion were born in 1950 or 1951, while my call-up was born in 1955. Maybe the minorities were older because of some accident, but most of them were.

One respondent recalled a less conventional method Soviet authorities use to track down reluctant conscript-age youth from the mountain regions of the USSR and the results of this method:

Sometimes they would simply fly a military helicopter around in the mountain regions. It would land in one place and they would look around, see a guy of approximately military age, and just take him. Because of this, one guy was brought to our construction battalion who actually was an Iranian citizen. He had crossed the border in the mountains—some of them don't even know that a border exists there—and they caught him and put him in service, although he had no passport and no papers. He served with us for a year and a half before they got it straightened out. It happened because one time when the *zampolit* [political officer] was discussing something and using a map, the guy said, "I think that is my region there. . . ." I think they sent him back.

Respondents agree that both nepotism and corruption are widespread practices in the *voenkomat* chain. It is reported that even though Soviet soldiers as a rule serve far away from home, people with proper "connections" can arrange both to serve near their homes and to receive desirable jobs. A second category of people for whom the *voenkomats* often make exceptions are recruits with special nonmilitary skills that are much in demand in the military. These exceptions include renowned sportsmen, musicians, artists, and actors. For individual military units, winning various interarmy sports championships and band or amateur theater competitions is a mark of great prestige, and commanders are said to be willing to go to considerable lengths to acquire talented youngsters.

A problem with more serious implications is the alleged prevalence of corrupt dealings and bribery within the *voenkomats*. None of our respondents expressed any doubt as to the continuation of the time-honored Russian tradition of payoffs (*blat*) in dealing with induction matters. Many of them knew of specific cases of corruption in the *voenkomats*, and several had personal experience in bribing *voenkomat* officials:

It is possible to bribe the recruiting officer to receive a deferment. If you have money, you can do anything. Especially those people who are on good terms with the Party brass in our republic [Latvia]. It was easy for our parents to bribe the *voenkomat* officer or even someone higher up to get us desk jobs in some military office rather than going into the ranks.

One can easily bribe people at the recruiting office. In the USSR, you can do anything with money. You can bribe to delay your service or avoid it altogether. Doctors can be bribed to give you a medical deferment. Everything connected with conscription can be bought and sold.

Everybody there takes bribes. You can simply go to the head of the *voenkomat* and tell him, "Look, I'll give you 2000 rubles if you do this," and he will do it.

You can bribe everywhere and everyone in the *voenkomat*. Of course, it depends on the particular person, and it is very expensive, but it is done all the time.

Bribing *voenkomat* officials usually is done to receive a temporary deferment from service, assignment to a unit close to home, or, in rarer cases, to avoid service altogether. The first two are commonplace. One of our respondents was able to get four consecutive deferments while finishing a technical school by having his father pay off the *voenkomat* chief. Another paid a bribe to secure a one-term deferment in the hope of being able to enter the university. A third bribed the local *voenkomat* commander in order to be able to serve in a construction battalion that was garrisoned within walking distance of his home in Azerbaidzhan. In his case, the payoff amounted to ten sheep.

Apparently, it is more difficult and costly to attempt to avoid service completely by bribing *voenkomat* officials because of the high risk this entails for the official involved. The most common method used is to bribe the *voenkomat* physician into pronouncing the recruit medically unfit for military service. A second method is to have an official with access to the files simply remove the recruit's dossier from the list subject to call-up. A native of Central Asia claimed that this was done in the case of all three of his brothers. He claimed he could have easily avoided service too but went into the service because he had ambitions of enter-

ing a prestigious institute, something which is said to be almost impossible without a good military record.

Indeed, it appears that *voenkomat* corruption is particularly prevalent in the Central Asian and Caucasian areas, or at least that is the general impression of our respondents from all parts of the USSR, including Central Asia and the Caucasus. Typical responses include:

I talked to an Azerbaidzhani fellow who told me that his brother had bribed the military commissar of his district to avoid service. The first time it cost him 12 sheep. The next time he came up to be drafted, the price was raised to 24 sheep, which he couldn't pay. So he was drafted.

Bribery is widely used in Central Asia to avoid military service. Much more common than in Russia proper. In Russia, the *kolkhozes* are very poor, so people have very little to bribe with, whereas in Central Asia, the *kolkhozes* are huge and wealthy.

Uzbeks used to bribe all the time. Some of them served for only one year. There is a regulation that if you have three children, you are not going to be drafted. So an Uzbek with two children would bribe someone so that his wife could visit him, she would get pregnant, and he would be discharged from the army. All the orientals bribed in this way.

Two of our respondents from Central Asia went so far as to claim that the possibility of getting a job in a local *voenkomat* may be a major incentive to pursue a military career for some Central Asians. Here is how one of them put it:

Why do some Central Asians want to serve in the army? It is very simple. They do it because after one has attained the rank of major he can return to his hometown as head of the *voenkomat* and for the rest of his days he and his children and their children will be well provided for.

Whether such practices are widespread or not in reality, many Soviet soldiers believe them to be common and to have a distinct ethnic dimension. For example, many of the Slavic soldiers, particularly the less well educated, seem to believe that Jews, Georgians, and Armenians do not serve in representative numbers, because they are in a position to buy their way out.³

³One of the authors observed this phenomenon personally while studying in Moscow. Among his acquaintances, the Georgians bragged openly about having bought their way out of military service.

III. GENERAL STATIONING GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES

As with induction and manning procedures, the ethnic factor decisively influences Soviet stationing practices. The basic principle according to which stationing of military units is carried out is extraterritoriality. In the simplest terms, this means that Soviet soldiers are not allowed to serve in their native regions but instead are stationed in geographically distant and ethnically different areas of the country.

The extraterritorial stationing principle has not always been the rule in the Soviet Army. Before World War II, the Red Army was mainly manned and deployed on a territorial basis. Only in the mid-1930s, and more specifically in the period 1935-1938, was the territorial principle finally abandoned and a massive transition to the cadre principle (*kadrovoy printsip*) occurred. Apparently, a partial reversal of this new policy took place during World War II, when the formation of some military units proceeded on the basis of territorial and nationality criteria.¹ Significantly, our respondents indicate that territorially manned and stationed units continued to exist after the war, perhaps as late as the early 1960s, although it is likely that there were only a few of these "national units." For example, several respondents provided fairly detailed, although at times contradictory, evidence that in the late 1940s and early 1950s something resembling national divisions were stationed in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaidzhan. Similarly, a Central Asian respondent claimed that there was an exclusively Kazakh division in Kazakhstan until 1962, and that a Turkmen division was disbanded before that. Respondents agreed that the abolition of national or quasination military units should be taken as a valuable clue to official Soviet attitudes. All respondents believed that the national divisions ultimately were disbanded because of ethnic unrest and suspected political disloyalty. Several of them noted that specific instances of anti-Soviet unrest in the 1950s, which had to be suppressed by military force, convinced the authorities that national units presented a very real danger to Soviet control in peripheral areas. For example, one eyewitness reports that after the 1956 riots in Tbilisi, the Georgian division stationed there, which evidently was not used in putting down the disturbances because of suspected unreliability, was quickly transported outside of Georgia and disbanded.

From the very beginning of the Soviet state, the Kremlin leadership has viewed the Red Army not only as the traditional defender of national security from foreign threats but also as an instrument of state control and the ultimate guarantor of the continued political hegemony of the Communist Party. For this reason, the key principle of extraterritorial stationing can be said to derive in no small measure from the regime's requirement of maintaining a reliable armed force for internal policing and control duties. Thus, the possibility that the army may have to be used to put down antiregime outbursts by ethnically diverse sectors of the Soviet population—as indeed it has been on more than one occasion—is an important factor influencing Party military stationing policies. Many of our respondents were very aware of this rationale:

¹For details, see Susan L. Curran and Dmitry Ponomareff, *Managing the Ethnic Factor in the Russian and Soviet Armed Forces: An Historical Overview*. The Rand Corporation, R-2640/1, forthcoming.

There are several reasons the authorities send a minority soldier to serve as far away from his home as possible. First, the further away he is from his home, the more difficult it will be for him to run away from his unit. Second, he will have less longing for his family. . . . Third, if you keep minorities away from their home areas, it will be easier to maintain control there in times of crisis. You have to keep minority soldiers from assisting their own people against the Russians.

The clear policy is to send minorities as far from home as possible, especially Caucasians, Central Asians, and Balts. I came across many Balts serving in the Far East and in Central Asia. These small nations have a strong feeling of their national culture and of national unity. If you get them far away from home they cannot support their own populations with weapons in the case of riots or other disturbances.

If you are an Uzbek, you go to Russia. If you are a Balt, you serve in Uzbekistan.

The government is trying all the time to make sure that military personnel will have no ties to the local population. Soldiers should not serve in a unit deployed in their native region, because, if the soldiers did have ties, relatives, or acquaintances in that area, it would be more difficult to send them to shoot at people if the need arose.

A great deal of translocation is going on all the time. For example, Russians would be sent to serve in Kazakhstan, while Kazakhs would go to the Ukraine. Ukrainians could serve in Georgia, Georgians somewhere in the Baltic area, and Baltic people might end up in Russia. This is done solely because the army bears to a great extent police functions. A Russian soldier probably would not shoot at Russian women, but a Kazakh would. He would say, "They are Russians. Let's get them."

Soldiers do not serve in the same area where they are born. This is done in order to prevent discontent and national feelings. There are official instructions specifying that people must serve in places far from their homes to avoid trouble and national solidarity.

The principle of extraterritoriality is especially observed with units that are specifically entrusted with internal policing functions, such as the forces of the Ministry of the Interior (MVD). Our respondents are fairly unanimous that MVD troops are never native to the area in which they are stationed and are from a different ethnic background as well.

Extraterritoriality is also relevant in some sensitive branches of the armed forces such as the Border Forces. For example, according to our respondents, the Border Forces are staffed almost exclusively with Slavic nationalities, although, even here, precautions are taken to ensure that they perform their duties correctly:

Border troops are mostly Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians, because native troops will not fire on their own countrymen. However, Ukrainians and Belorussians do not serve on the borders of their own republic.

Border units in the Far East consist basically of Ukrainians and Belorussians, whereas Russians serve on the western border. Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, and other minorities are not trusted at all. They do not serve in the Border Forces.

Most of the border troops are Russian, because they are trusted more than others. Definitely, no one from a republic with ethnic kin directly across a border would be allowed to serve in the Border Forces of that republic.

Soviet forces stationed abroad also appear to be staffed primarily with Slavic, mostly Russian, soldiers. Interestingly, several of our respondents believed that a special category of Russians is preferred for service in Eastern Europe. In their view, conscripts for service are most likely to be chosen from the rural areas of central Russia. They explain why:

There are many Russian peasants from the Kalinin, Yaroslav, and Tula regions who are sent to serve in Eastern Europe. They are sent there because they are sufficiently civilized to know what a toilet is and how to behave themselves more or less in a civilized manner. At the same time, these peasants are less educated, less informed, easier to indoctrinate, and less likely to ask questions.

Strictest selection of troops takes place for service in Eastern Europe. Mostly what you see there are Russians from the villages, although there are some Ukrainians and Belorussians and a few of the minorities. The Russian peasants are very much attached to their villages and families, and would rarely think of running away. Also, they are not Western oriented. Indeed, they are afraid of the West because it is something they don't know. For them, Russia and their relatives back in the Motherland are everything.

These reports contradict speculations by some Western analysts that the Soviet contingents stationed in Eastern Europe may include sizable non-Russian and especially Asian contingents. We suspect that where small concentrations of non-Russian, and especially Asian, Soviet troops have been sighted in Eastern Europe, such as in Prague in the aftermath of the 1968 invasion, these soldiers probably serve in the MVD forces. As we describe in the next section, MVD troops have a distinct ethnic profile and they perform duties, such as military and industrial security, riot control, penal institution security, and convoy escort that one would logically expect to see in a postinvasion environment. It is not known whether there are specific regulations establishing a distance limit in applying the extraterritorial principle. The sole respondent who claimed knowledge in this area asserted that, according to regulations, recruits should be stationed no less than 800 miles from their home regions. We have been unable to confirm this dictum from other sources.

There is one significant exception to extraterritoriality. It involves troops engaged in nonmilitary pursuits, such as construction battalions and railroad support units. It is reported, for example, that many Central Asians in the construction troops do serve in their republics and even in their native towns. To the extent that these units are not armed and seldom receive any military training (see Sec. V), this practice does not appear to conflict with the internal policing rationale of extraterritoriality. There are, of course, as already mentioned, numerous cases in which the extraterritorial imperative is circumvented through bribes.

The extraterritorial principle also breaks down in the event of an emergency mobilization. Most divisions stationed in the Soviet Union are not fully manned. In order to be staffed to prescribed order of battle strengths, they need considerable numbers of reserve personnel, usually 50 percent or more. Should a quick fleshing out of such units be required, the needed contingent of reservists could only be drawn from the local population. Such conscription in minority areas could result in mobilized divisions containing many native soldiers, which is evidently what happened during the initial period of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.²

Associated with extraterritoriality is the Soviet practice of stationing military units and installations away from population centers. In many cases, a conscious effort is made to isolate the servicemen and prevent extensive contacts with the local population (see Sec. VII). Many interviewees report a de facto quarantine in effect in their units. Particularly in Central Asia and the Caucasus, soldiers serving within 20 to 30 kilometers of major towns often were not able to visit them until their demobilization. Policies in this respect appear to be more liberal in predominantly Russian areas, where soldiers reportedly are allowed to visit nearby settlements on a regular basis. In all cases reported, officers enjoyed unrestricted freedom of travel regardless of area of stationing. It should be noted, however, that career personnel, as a rule, reside in self-contained military settlements immediately adjacent to the base, which by itself limits contact with the indigenous population.

²For a discussion of this development and its implications, see S. Enders Wimbush and A. Alexiev, *Soviet Central Asian Soldiers in Afghanistan*, The Rand Corporation, N-1634 1, January 1981.

IV. ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF CONSCRIPTS, NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS, AND THE OFFICER CORPS

Soviet adherence to the principle of universal conscription implies that the ethnic composition of those drafted into the armed forces should proportionately reflect the ethnic makeup of the Soviet population. In fact, such a makeup appears to apply to the total cohort of conscripts serving their obligatory two- and three-year military term, although, as we shall see, major and evidently planned differentials in the ethnic mix occur in different services and branches. However, the ethnic composition of the noncommissioned officers and the officer corps is far from ethnically proportional. We must examine these disparities and their apparent rationale in Soviet policy to understand clearly the influence of the ethnic factor in the Soviet military.

CONSCRIPTS

The most dramatic difference in ethnic ratios among draftees can be observed between combat and noncombat units, according to our respondents. All our evidence to date shows conclusively that Soviet combat units are staffed by a clear majority of representatives of the Slavic nationalities. Respondents who had served in the past 10 to 15 years could recall few combat units above battalion size, regardless of the branch, in which the percentage of Slavic soldiers was less than 80 percent of the total; and in many cases they observed that the percentage of Slavic conscripts was even greater. Conversely, the ratio of non-Slavs in some noncombat formations, such as the construction troops, reportedly often reached 90 percent or more. The following comment by a former officer is typical of our sample:

There are definite nationality-based criteria for service in the army. Non-Slavic nationalities are in the overwhelming minority in combat units. Noncombat units, such as the construction battalions, do not have very many Russians, Ukrainians, or Belorussians. The soldiers there are people from Central Asia and the Caucasus. In regular units there are few of these latter soldiers, only those that are educated and trusted.

Our sample reflects a clear trend—that non-Slavic nationalities, for whatever reason, are not allowed to serve in Soviet combat units in numbers proportionate to their share of the general population.

The considerable differentials in minority representation within various services and branches of the combat forces warrant several general observations. Unquestionably, the units with the most limited non-Slavic representation are in the modern, high-technology services, such as the Strategic Rocket Forces, the Air Force, and the Navy. According to the limited information available to us regarding the Air Force and the Navy, both of these services are close to 100-percent Slavic, with a very large Russian majority. To the extent non-Slavs are present at all, they are mainly restricted to a variety of support duties.

Minorities appear to serve in somewhat larger numbers in the SRF. Former SRF servicemen in our sample reported that non-Slavs represented up to 10 percent of their units. Some of them were reported to be well-educated people from the Baltic Republics, who were valued for their technological aptitude and training; that is, they served alongside Slavic soldiers

even though they were Balts. Respondents from SRF troops report only a scattering of Central Asians and Caucasians in their units. One respondent, whose SRF unit was located in Kazakhstan, recalled that there was not a single Kazakh in the unit and only a handful of Uzbeks. Moreover, even when they are drafted into SRF units, these minorities seldom are entrusted with militarily relevant duties and often are relegated to menial chores. Another respondent described the role of minorities in his SRF unit in northern Russia as follows:

In my unit there were no more than 10-percent minorities. There were quite a few Kazakhs, about ten Turkmen, and several Uzbeks. These people were incorporated into the unit as support personnel and worked much like construction battalions. As a rule, these minorities did not deal with any sophisticated equipment, but were engaged primarily in building and repairing shelters, construction, and so forth.

The larger percentage of minorities from Central Asia and the Caucasus in the SRF is explained by most respondents with reference to the greater need for manual labor in the SRF than in other high-technology branches.

Among the factors said to contribute to such a policy toward the minorities are insufficient education, language incompetence, and perceived disloyalty. The last factor is considered particularly important, and ethnic groups who are deemed to harbor anti-Soviet attitudes, such as Jews and Soviet Germans, seldom are drafted into the SRF. Even among Slavs, Komsomol membership and a clean political record are considered obligatory for service in the SRF.

The percentage of non-Slavic nationalities is likely to be higher in the more traditional branches of the army, such as armor, artillery, and infantry. Those of our respondents who served in units of this kind indicate that non-Slavs often make up to 20 percent of regimental-size units, and occasionally more than 20 percent in smaller units. For example, the ethnic composition of one mechanized infantry regiment, which was stationed in the Far East in 1969 and is said to be typical, was composed of 80 percent Slavs, 10 percent Central Asians, 5 percent Balts, and 5 percent Caucasians (Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaidzhanis). One curious exception, for which none of our respondents had an explanation, was a company in this regiment that was staffed almost exclusively by Central Asians but, as usual, with Russian officers.

More or less the same general 80/20-percent mix is reported to be the case in artillery units deployed within Soviet borders. Again, as in the case of the more prestigious services, many of the minority soldiers clearly serve in various support capacities. Higher minority representation, particularly Central Asian, in regular military functions is reported in the tank forces. The explanation given by several respondents is that the Central Asians' small size makes them especially suitable for service in tank crews.

Two clear trend lines emerge from our interviews. First, non-Slavic nationalities are strongly underrepresented in combat units of the Soviet armed forces. Second, even those minorities who are drafted into combat units usually serve in noncombat capacities, often receiving no systematic military instruction beyond basic training.

Minority conscripts who are not drafted into regular army units are sent to serve in a variety of other units, which we have grouped together, somewhat arbitrarily, in the category of "noncombat." The two major elements of this category, and the ones about which we possess the most information, are the construction battalions (*stroibat*) and the internal security forces (MVD). Even though some of the units included under the noncombat label receive considerable military training (e.g., the MVD), their primary mission is not strictly a military one. At the same time, noncombat formations constitute a large proportion of the Soviet armed forces and play an important role in the Soviet military system.

Although the *stroibats*, the largest single component of noncombat troops, are used primarily on construction projects of military relevance, they have been known in the past to build civilian projects, and they continue to do so at present. It is impossible to estimate the number of personnel serving in these battalions, but all evidence indicates that they represent a sizable share of the armed forces as a whole. Our respondents estimate this number from a low of 7 percent to a high of 20 percent, with most of the estimates falling in the 10- to 15-percent range. *Stroibats* are located throughout the country and often are to be found side by side with regular units. Unlike regular units, however, they are seldom stationed in permanent quarters and move on as soon as a project is finished.

The construction battalions are under the general jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Defense and possibly under one of its special directorates. We have information indicating that the various services (Army, Navy, Air Force, Strategic Rocket Forces) may have their own *stroibats*, but the available evidence does not allow us to elaborate on the nature of these battalions at this time. It is clear, however, that the construction troops have an identical internal structure with regular army units, and that they draw recruits on a semiannual basis from the same general conscript pool.

The similarity with combat units ends here, however. Construction units are perhaps the only part of the Soviet armed forces where non-Slavic nationalities, particularly Soviet Asian nationalities, outnumber the Slavs by substantial margins. Also *stroibats* are by far the least prestigious units. Indeed, many Slavs consider them to be a form of punishment. Data provided by respondents who served in construction battalions, including several who served as officers, are remarkably uniform, and they give the following picture of the ethnic breakdown: Slavs, as a rule, represent no more than 20 percent, usually much less, while Central Asians amount to 50 percent or more. The balance is composed of Caucasians, Balts, and Jews. The latter are said to be particularly overrepresented in *stroibats* in the last ten years or so. Also overrepresented are Western Ukrainians, who have a long tradition both of anti-Sovietism and russophobia.

Assignment to a *stroibat* is decided on the basis of several factors. With some important exceptions, these are valid for both Slavs and non-Slavs. The most important criteria for assignment are insufficient education, poor health, a criminal history, language incompetence, and suspected disloyalty. Few Russians, or even people from the European part of the Soviet Union, end up in the *stroibats* because of lack of education or poor health. According to our respondents, the common denominator for a majority of *stroibat* conscripts, Slav and non-Slav alike, is perceived disloyalty to the regime. The important difference is that Russians are suspected individually, whereas Central Asians, Jews, Germans, Estonians, and other minorities are suspected collectively. Respondents commented:

In the USSR there are no restrictions on military service based on nationality. According to the principle of universal and obligatory service, everyone must be drafted, but there is one major catch. A majority of the nationalities that are considered either culturally underdeveloped or untrustworthy, such as the Caucasians, Azerbaidzhanis, Moldavians, Jews, and all the *churkas* are sent to the construction battalions.

If a draftee is considered a bit unloyal, if he had said something against the regime someplace, or even if his father or grandfather were politically suspect, then he is sent to the *stroibat*. So there are basically two categories of people who are drafted to serve there—individuals who have something negative in their dossiers, and people from the minorities who are not trusted on principle.

Construction battalions consist primarily of minorities, uneducated people, and those that are against the regime. They are all considered unfit for regular service.

As these observations and others indicate, all *stroibat* recruits, regardless of nationality, are considered of doubtful military utility by military authorities. Despite this, there are indications that a strict hierarchy, based on nationality, exists, even within the construction units. Here again, as in the case of regular units, Central Asians appear to be at the very bottom. A former commander of a *stroibat* company described what he considered to be the typical division of labor in his unit:

The non-Russians usually were kept on jobs that did not require special qualification. If we were working on a building, for example, the division of labor would be something like this: The Russians usually handled the most sophisticated equipment; Ukrainians and other Europeans would be laying cable inside the building; while the *churkas* would be outside digging ditches or whatever other hard work needed to be done.

Paradoxically, for all the hardships and indignities suffered by minorities in the construction battalions, our respondents report that service in these units has some advantages. First, they all agreed that military discipline is more lax in the *stroibat* than anywhere else in the army. This is undoubtedly because servicemen in these units do not deal with strictly military affairs or equipment and have little or no military training of any kind (see Sec. V). Second, because construction battalions are for the most part overwhelmingly constituted of minorities, the minority recruit stands a fairly good chance of serving with a large number of his coethnics, which assures him a certain cultural ambience that cannot be found in other units. Finally, *stroibat* soldiers who work on civilian projects are paid salaries that are incomparably higher than the token allowances given to regular conscripts, although not as high as to civilians.¹ This may be an additional incentive.

Staffing policies for the MVD are also interesting for what they indicate about the ethnic mix of different units and of the official perceptions of how the ethnic factor is to be managed in the armed forces and in Soviet society. Being under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministerstvo Vnutrennykh Del*), these troops are often referred to as MVD troops. They should not be confused with the Militia, which is a more traditional law-and-order organ, also under MVD jurisdiction. The primary function of the MVD troops appears to be ensuring internal security and political order in the USSR, which, in extreme cases, may call for suppressing riots, civil disturbances, and other breakdowns of varying seriousness. According to several of our respondents, units of MVD troops are stationed in every Soviet town above a certain size, although the specific criteria are not known. Most MVD units are described as mechanized infantry; in larger cities the MVD may also have jurisdiction over armored units. One of their main responsibilities, apart from the general ones described above, is to guard the extensive network of Soviet penal institutions, including prisons and labor camps. As with construction troops, internal security detachments are manned exclusively with regular draftees.

Because of their insignificant political function, it is surprising to find that non-Slavic minorities are drafted into these units in substantial numbers. Those of our respondents who had served or had contact with MVD units were convinced that this unusual situation was the result of a well-thought-out policy of exploiting interethnic animosities for the regime's purposes. The following comments are typical:

There are many minorities in the MVD troops, especially from Central Asia. They serve most often as guards in prisons and in the *Gulag*. This is done conscientiously in order to improve control. Their Russian is not good, but they do an excellent job in their guard duties and are

¹When *stroibat* conscripts are paid for working on civilian projects, a certain percentage is withheld from their wages to pay for food, lodging, and uniforms.

considered the most reliable guards for prisons and camps. They are also very tough and cruel, having no sympathy for the prisoners and displaying great hostility toward the Russian inmates. There have been cases where a minority would kill prisoners without any reason. This whole system is not accidental, however, but the result of a very clever and refined policy. There are special experts in the Soviet Army who study national characteristics and assign people accordingly.

Generally speaking, it is mostly Central Asians who serve in the Internal Security Troops. They are put there because these are people who are ruthless and do not know what humanism is. If they were told to shoot and kill Russian prisoners, they would do it with great pleasure. That's why there are a lot more *churkas* in these units than Russians.

People from Central Asia are regularly drafted into MVD units because they are known for their obedience, stupidity, and cruelty. They do everything they are asked to without thinking, and are especially mean toward Russians.

Everyone knows that the minorities, the *churkas*, are sent to serve in the MVD. They make very effective, very brutal prison guards, among other things.

I witnessed four call-ups to my [MVD] unit, and during each of them the majority of the recruits were from the most remote regions of Azerbaidzhan. They had no education whatsoever and spoke absolutely no Russian. There were also many Kazakhs from the remote areas of Kazakhstan, and Uzbeks too. Once the call-up brought us a lot of people from the mountains of Georgia. As a rule, all of these people were uneducated and spoke no Russian.

There is a certain national hostility by Uzbeks and Kazakhs toward Russians and the MVD forces capitalize on this factor.

There are millions of *churkas* who know no Russian and the authorities try to use them in construction and railroad troops and in the MVD. In the MVD, they fulfill orders. A sergeant serves as an interpreter to them. Many are taken directly from the most primitive auls.

Several respondents observed that the policy of using minorities to ensure order in the Soviet empire has strong historical roots:

The MVD troops are mostly Asians, who are indifferent to Slavic problems and affairs. They are not inferior human beings, simply closer to the level of carrying out orders. They have always executed orders well. They do not question, do not analyze. After all, Lenin knew this and used national minorities all the time.

This is a general policy initiated by Lenin. When he wanted faithful guards, Lenin took Latvian riflemen with him. He knew that if you want to protect yourself against Russians, you put minorities in charge. If you are afraid of minorities, you use Russians.

The ethnic mix of MVD units varies greatly depending on function and area of stationing, but our respondents seem to agree that about half are Central Asians and from one-quarter to a third are Slavs. Considerably overrepresented appear to be a number of smaller minorities residing in the Russian republic (RSFSR), such as Mordvinians, Udmurts, and Chuvash. These nationalities also reenlist much more often than others and, thus, make up a high percentage of the noncommissioned officer corps. In all cases, reported minorities make up a clear majority in units providing guard duty and security at the labor camps and other penal institutions. Information on the composition of MVD troops stationed in cities is fragmentary. An interviewee who was a long-time resident of Kiev said that half of the MVD units there were staffed by Asians and people from the Caucasus, with the other half presumably Russian.² An Estonian respondent claimed that most MVD soldiers in his republic were Russian.

Our interviews illuminate still another intriguing area of non-Russian minority service that we should clarify. Several respondents who served in the combat troops were familiar

²One of the present authors on several occasions observed sizable mounted detachments of Central Asian MVD troops in Moscow.

with predominantly non-Slavic units performing guard duties at various locations. For example, an airfield near Alma Ata in which one respondent served was secured by a guard company in which Udmurt and Chechen conscripts formed an 80-percent majority. In another regimental-size garrison in the Far East near the Chinese border, the entire military police detachment was said to consist of Kazakhs, with the exception of the commander. It is unknown if either of these units was from the MVD troops, or whether they were special guard units within the regular army structure.

NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS

A clear ethnic portrait of sergeants and noncommissioned officers emerges from the interviews.³ Sergeants are of two sorts: (1) those who are serving one obligatory term in the military and who have been promoted to sergeant or perhaps attended a sergeants' school and (2) professional sergeants who remain in the military on extended service duty. In the first category, the majority clearly are Slavs, but non-Slavic servicemen can be and often are promoted to junior sergeant rank depending on the immediate requirements of their particular unit. Without attending a sergeants' school, apparently one can be promoted to junior sergeant rank depending on the immediate requirements of the particular unit. These sergeants wield very little power and often possess less real authority over other conscripts than second-year recruits, according to our respondents.

A somewhat different policy concerning NCOs is practiced in the construction troops. Evidently, there are considerable numbers of minority sergeants in the *stroibats*. These are promoted, according to respondents, without any training or preparation, and are put in charge of work teams comprised of their coethnics. In some cases, their only qualification is said to be a fair command of the Russian language.

In the second category of sergeants, there are very few non-Slavs among the extended term and career NCOs and almost no Central Asians. These findings were not unexpected and appear to conform to general manning trends in the Soviet military.

Our examination of the ethnic mix of NCOs did result in a rather surprising finding concerning the Slavic majority. According to all of our respondents, Ukrainians constitute a majority, perhaps a large majority, among Soviet sergeants. They appear to be grossly over-represented, not only in proportion to their share of the total Soviet population but also to the Ukrainian share of the Slavic population. Our interviewees advanced several explanations for this phenomenon. A considerable number of respondents attributed Ukrainian predominance among the NCOs to an alleged national affinity for the military service and careerism. Again, the attitudes of the respondents, of whom only one was a Ukrainian, revealed some deep-rooted national prejudices. These are some examples:

The Ukrainians make excellent sergeants and junior commanders from the authorities' point of view and are much preferred for this type of service. It is a part of the Ukrainian character to like military service. This is historically conditioned and predates the revolution. They have a warrior tradition and once they enter the service and get those cherished high boots and the leather belt, they are psychologically affected.

The Ukrainians, more than anybody else, strove for promotion. For most of the people in the army, the greatest prize is to be able to get a leave. Not so for the Ukrainians. They would do

³The Soviet Army has the following ranks between private and junior lieutenant: corporal (*efreitor*), junior sergeant (*mladshi serzhant*), sergeant (*serzhant*), senior sergeant (*starshi serzhant*), master sergeant (*starshina*), and warrant officer (*praporshchik*). There are no exact equivalents of these ranks in the U.S. armed forces.

everything to get promoted first because power over other soldiers seems to be very important to them.

All the noncommissioned positions in my unit were occupied by Ukrainians. These sergeants all want to command more than the Russians; the Russians are more inert. The Ukrainians are all careerists and upstarts.

About 75 percent of the noncommissioned officers in the army are of Ukrainian origin. They all reenlist when their normal term expires. They were despicable people much hated and feared by the soldiers.

There are ethnic categories of sergeants. Most of them are Ukrainians, which seems to be sort of a rule in the army. Maybe this is due to their ethnic characteristics. As a rule they are known as cruel and completely unscrupulous.

Soldiers from the Ukraine become sergeants immediately. They like to command and would do anything to get promoted so that they can order people around. They are also very rude, cruel, and malicious. A Ukrainian sergeant may have only twenty people under his command, but he will still sneer at them continuously, make them march around, or send them to clean latrines for half the night just for the sheer pleasure of humiliating somebody. This is a very characteristic trait of the Ukrainians and everybody in the Soviet Army knows about it.

Apart from such an alleged national predisposition toward military service, many respondents recognized other more tangible reasons and incentives for Ukrainians to strive for the NCO ranks. It was generally agreed that reenlistment in the armed forces is almost the only way for a young person to escape the particularly dreary life in an Ukrainian village.⁴ As one respondent put it succinctly:

If you were born in the village, you will live there all of your life. There are only two ways to get out of the village in the Soviet Union: through the university or through the army. For the peasant, only the second alternative is viable.

Another reason reenlistment is an attractive option for some stems from the army practice of issuing internal passports to extended service personnel who have served a three- or five-year term. This incentive was emphasized by the Ukrainian in our sample:

As a rule, simple people from the *kolkhozes*, villages, and remote places reenlist. They do that because if one is drafted from a *kolkhoz* he must return there at the end of his service term. He has no passport and cannot go to the city. However, after you reenlist for three years and fulfill your contract, you are given a passport and are free to go anywhere. That is why people reenlist. Ordinarily, these people are Ukrainians.

Not only are former NCOs granted the right to settle in a city after demobilization, but their chances of receiving a well-paid job in the city are excellent. According to our respondents, upon discharge all former NCOs are given the option of joining either the Militia or the KGB in the city of their choice. In both cases, they keep their military ranks or are immediately promoted one grade. There are also significant material incentives and rewards for reenlisting as a sergeant or a warrant officer. To begin with, salaries in the army are much higher than those on the collective farm; and for most of the prospective NCOs, who are said to have generally low educational levels, comparable salaries are unattainable in any other field of endeavor. The army also provides free housing, meals, clothing, and generous vacations. We have some sketchy evidence that there may be additional if unofficial inducements. One respondent recalled being told by his master sergeant, who intended to return to his village

⁴Most village dwellers in the Soviet Union, at least until very recently, are not allowed to settle in a city unless they are given a special permission (*propushk*). This system, for all practical purposes, ties them to the *kolkhoz* in a manner not altogether different from the way in which indentured serfs in czarist Russia were tied to the feudal estate.

after the expiration of his term, that he had been offered a house and small piece of land for a five-year reenlistment.

All of these incentives, of course, are open to non-Ukrainians as well, but apart from Ukrainians and rural Russians, few other nationalities seem to show much enthusiasm for reenlistment. Basically, our informants believed that non-Slavs do not wish to reenlist for the simple reason that they find the army environment culturally, linguistically, and socially alien, if not hostile. The material incentives mentioned above may not be as important to them, because the standard of living is considerably higher in the non-Slavic than in the Slavic rural areas.

OFFICERS

To a much greater extent than in the NCO ranks, the Soviet officer corps is ethnically Slavic with an overwhelming Russian majority. Most of our respondents had seen but few minority officers of Central Asian or Caucasian origin and an occasional Baltic or Jewish officer. A comparison of the information provided by those of our respondents who had served in the 1940s and 1950s with those who had served in the 1970s suggests that over the years the Soviet officer corps has become more homogeneously Slavic and Russian instead of becoming more ethnically diverse. Several of our respondents suggested that since World War II not only has there been no conscious effort to recruit ethnic minorities into the officer ranks but, if anything, the military authorities have attempted to "purify" the officer corps as much as possible. We were told of two specific instances of such ethnic purification policies.⁵ The first case involved an alleged purge of Jewish officers said to have taken place in the early 1950s. In the second instance, a former colonel said that Khrushchev's troop reductions in the late 1950s resulted in the demobilization of a much larger proportion of non-Slavic than Slavic officers.

It was generally agreed that the Russian share of the corps is in excess of 80 percent of the total, with perhaps 10 to 15 percent Ukrainians and Belorussians and a scattering of others. Several aspects of Soviet recruitment and management policies with regard to the officer corps, taken together, ensure a strong Russian overrepresentation. First, it appears that the Soviet military education system, which produces most of the officer cadres, has some features that strongly prejudice the chances of a non-Russian against being accepted. To mention only one, all candidates for admission to Soviet officer schools must take an entrance examination in Russian language and literature, which immediately puts non-Russians at a distinct disadvantage. Although none of our interviewees knew of official policies to discourage minority pursuit of the officer career, few doubted that there are unofficial directives to this end, at least in certain fields. A former professor at an important signal corps training academy told us that after more than 20 years of teaching there he could recall only a handful of non-Slavic cadets, although the academy trained considerable numbers of foreign students. In his view, prestigious military schools such as Nakhimov and Suvorov are simply not open to the minorities. He further pointed out that most military academies are located in Russia proper, which may serve to discourage potential candidates living in border areas from apply-

⁵While we have not been able to substantiate this claim from other sources, it is interesting that a similar purification drive to root out Jews from the Polish military took place in the early 1960s. See A. Ross Johnson, Robert W. Dean, and Alexander Alexiev, *East European Military Establishments: The Warsaw Pact Northern Tier*, The Rand Corporation, R-2417/1-AF/FF, December 1980, pp. 48-55.

ing. In his opinion, Soviet failure to build more officer schools in non-Soviet areas is not accidental.

Second, another interesting practice contributing to Russian predominance in the officer corps involves what amounts to involuntary recruitment of cadres. It is not unusual, according to our respondents, for the military authorities to approach university graduates from institutions with a military chair and offer them an opportunity to join the army for a period of from two to five years. We are told that, in practice, it is impossible for an individual to refuse such an offer, because not only would a refusal be interpreted as a hostile act, but it might also result in the loss of the individual's university diploma. This seems to be a widespread practice and is said to apply mainly to Russians below the age of 30 who are specialists in military-relevant fields, including physicians.

There are also cases where individuals sign a contract for a limited term, which, upon expiration, is prolonged unilaterally by the authorities without the officer's consent. Two such cases were described to us:

In my unit there was a senior lieutenant who had graduated from the Institute of Communications in Moscow. After that he was drafted for two years, but when his term was up there was an order from the Minister of Defense and he was left to serve in the army indefinitely. This was not voluntary—it was an order. When one enters the army and takes an oath, one is no longer a free man. This officer hated the military and was despondent, but there was nothing he could do.

One of the officers in the special construction and assembly unit had been signed on for three years as a specialist, but later they kept him on. He was very angry and kept getting drunk and causing all kinds of problems, but they still didn't let him go. They just didn't promote him so he was only a lieutenant, though he was thirty years old.

Involuntary recruitment is made more palatable by the high salaries offered by the military. A former engineering graduate whose friend was drafted in this way recalled that his salary in the military was two and a half times higher than his civilian wages.

The third reason for Russian predominance among officers is that non-Slavs are said to be discouraged from pursuing a military career by certain discriminatory practices toward them once they are in the service. Respondents who had served recently recalled seeing no minority officers with a rank higher than major. Several had served with officers who, although close to retirement, had not progressed beyond major, whereas much younger Russians had attained superior grades. For example, an air defense brigade in which one of our interviewees served had a Jewish deputy chief of staff who, despite having graduated from a prestigious staff academy, had remained a major while his considerably younger and less-educated superior was a colonel. The same may be true with respect to the officers in the reserve. For instance, one Russian respondent, who was given a junior lieutenant's rank after graduating from the university, was promoted to captain of the reserves in eight years. His best friend, who was Jewish and also an engineer, remained a junior lieutenant and was seldom if ever called to reserve duty.

Respondents suggest that within the officer corps there appears to be a slight ethnically determined functional differentiation. Ukrainian officers are reported to serve mostly as political officers and regular line officers, and people of Baltic origin are almost exclusively in technical positions. Among the few remaining Jewish officers, most are also specialists; surprisingly some are still to be found among the *zampolits* or political officers.

V. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Soviet soldier, according to official Soviet sources, is formed both before and during his actual term of obligatory service. On one hand, special programs help to prepare him during civilian life for the military responsibilities that await him once in the ranks. On the other hand, special educational and technical programs offered during his obligatory service prepare him to defend his country and to return to nonmilitary life with higher educational achievements, technical skills, or critical training. Perhaps most important of all, the soldier returning to nonmilitary life is intended to have reached a higher level of civic consciousness.

Considering the traditional role that multiethnic armies have played in offering opportunities to members of minority groups for upward mobility and personal advancement, the preinduction and in-service training and education practices for Soviet minorities should be given particular attention. Official Soviet sources themselves claim that minorities do benefit significantly from the substantial sums invested before and during service to raise their level of educational attainment and technical capability. The experiences of our respondents reveal a more ambiguous and differentiated picture.

GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

With few exceptions, our sample reports that minorities reporting for service, for the most part, display very different levels of educational and technical attainment. Although it was pointed out by many respondents that it was not impossible to find educated, skilled, and linguistically adept members in nearly all minority groups, some groups were perceived to be clearly better prepared for military service than others. Balts generally are regarded as the best educated and skilled servicemen, followed at some distance by Slavs, Georgians, and Armenians from urban environments, and rural youth from these regions. Dead last in everyone's estimation are Central Asians, Kazakhs, Azerbaidzhanis, and Muslim North Caucasians. Significantly, this general impressionistic order of ranking the educational level of Soviet minorities was propounded across the sample, by Balts, Slavs, and Central Asians alike.

Three observations form the basis of these impressions. First, although most respondents acknowledged that many minorities finish secondary education before entering the armed forces—that is, in theory they are educated equally—the quality of education differs dramatically among regions. Whereas ten years of education means one thing for Balts or urban Slavs, it can, and usually does, mean something very different for Central Asians, urban or rural. Simply, ten grades of education in Riga or Leningrad is thought to be of considerably higher quality than ten years in Tashkent, Ferghana, or Baku.

Second, Balts, Slavs, and, to a much lesser extent, Georgians and Armenians are viewed as knowing or having the ability to learn the Russian language to a much greater degree than are Soviet Central Asians, Kazakhs, North Caucasians, and, to a lesser extent, Azerbaidzhanis. In fact, it may be that an existing language barrier between "Europeans" and "Asians" prejudices the case against the latter by making them appear to be uneducated when in fact they are merely uncommunicative. If so, it is a prejudice reinforced by stationing practices (see Sec. III).

Third, respondents point to a dramatically lower ability of Central Asians and other Muslims to use technologically advanced equipment, including weapons. In part, this observation stems from the one above, that many minorities cannot manage the Russian language and therefore are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to adapting to new technologies. The following responses are typical of the sample:

It is, of course, difficult for minorities to use certain equipment because of the low level of their technical education. They have to be trained more. And during the first year of service it is very hard to communicate with them because they do not know Russian. One has to speak with them through an interpreter.

Minorities who are drafted into the Navy get the same kind of training Russians do. Many minorities cannot master their skills and are dropped from the program. They are sent to supplementary units or coastal service units.

Central Asians who were attached to our radio unit could not understand the technology at all. If they worked at the radio stations, they dealt with very simple operations, like tightening bolts and lubricating the equipment.

Difficulties soldiers have in adjusting to advanced technological and combat systems are not only a matter of a lack of technical training, although this clearly is a factor, but of a poor knowledge of Russian as well. This is a big problem among minorities. Many know Russian very poorly. They cannot learn terminology or read diagrams or schematics.

In our antiaircraft rocket battalion near Sevastopol, we had a few Kazakhs and a few Moldavians. They couldn't do anything. Our officers wouldn't let them use the equipment because as soon as they had access to some device, they broke it and failure would occur.

A fourth observation made by a number of respondents, including several officers and sergeants, was that distrust and dislike of minorities by commanding officers may be part of the reason minorities only seldom are granted access to high-level technology:

It is because they are not trusted that their technical educational level is kept low. They have no access to the equipment, or the authorities at least try to arrange it so that they don't.

In our communications unit of the MVD, both the chief of communications and the chief of engineering and technical guard services hated the minorities. They would not send them for training or take them into their platoons. You could find only drivers or tractor operators among the minority specialists. . . . As a rule, they were not given any chances to work with equipment or advanced combat systems, with the exception of submachine guns.

One common observation, which relates to the idea that education among the Asiatic minorities is not on a par with that of a Russian or Slav, was that many Central Asians and Caucasians actually had completed only a few grades of schooling when they arrived for military service. All other things being equal, this suggests that at least part of the cohort of draftable minorities may in fact be less well educated in terms of the number of years spent in school than the Slavs and Balts.

PREINDUCTION MILITARY TRAINING

In Moscow and other large Russian cities, students are often required to attend "military training" classes for two or three hours per week beginning in the eighth or ninth grade. They are taught to march in formation; some are shown weapons, but are given little or no training in their maintenance or use. This "military training" is a regular part of the curriculum of these schools, but it is unclear if it is included in the curricula of schools in many non-Russian regions.

For the most part, preinduction military training is the preserve of DOSAAF,¹ as with military classes in secondary schools. Respondents who were raised in large Russian cities indicated that DOSAAF is quite active there. Among other opportunities, DOSAAF offered such alluring pursuits as parachute jumping and scuba diving, radio operation and repair, armaments maintenance, and equipment operation. Several respondents noted that DOSAAF-trained specialists in their units were particularly valuable. In the fields of radio operation and repair, for example, DOSAAF appears to provide a significant head start for preinduction youth. Respondents with parachute training indicate that the large majority of conscripts who enter the parachute units receive their initial training from DOSAAF.

However, the extent and effectiveness of DOSAAF activities appear to be limited in two important ways. First, because DOSAAF is a voluntary organization, not all preinduction-age youth participate. Of our sample, most of those born and raised in large cities of Russia knew what DOSAAF was and of its advertised functions. Many, considerably more than half of the sample, however, never participated in DOSAAF activities. A number of reasons, including simple disinterest or open disdain, particularly by Balts, are cited. Another important reason is the selection criteria employed by DOSAAF organizations for the most attractive occupations, such as parachuting and radio operations. Apparently, only those students with special educational qualifications, unblemished records, or family connections are accepted. Still others simply think of DOSAAF as another official propaganda agency that exacts dues from its members and, except for the lucky few, offers little more than uninspiring political lectures in return.

Second, DOSAAF activities are limited because it clearly does not operate as widely and does not offer as rich a menu of activities in the non-Russian areas of the USSR as it does in Russia proper. This is confirmed by nearly every member of our sample from outlying regions, especially from non-Russian nationalities, and by a longtime employee of DOSAAF's Moscow City organization who had traveled extensively on DOSAAF business. In some parts of the Soviet borderlands, particularly in Central Asia and the Caucasus, no DOSAAF organizations exist. Where DOSAAF does operate in the non-Russian regions, it seldom offers the alluring or technologically demanding courses available in large Russian cities. Thus, while skydiving, radio operation, and marksmanship are routinely taught in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and even Tula, preinduction youth from the southern and eastern borderlands generally are limited to driver's training and truck operation, if anything. Some former servicemen who had been stationed or lived in these areas claim that DOSAAF activities in non-Russian areas amount to no more than registering people. Typical is this response from a Daghestani:

People at the factories in Makhachkala had to pay DOSAAF dues and were given identification cards. No DOSAAF military training or sports activities were offered in return. All we were expected to do was to pay our dues.

No one from the sample could identify Russian language training programs for non-Russian speakers among DOSAAF activities. Indeed, it appears that there do not exist any special programs for minorities, despite their obvious and well-known linguistic and other deficiencies. In fact, where DOSAAF does operate in the southern and eastern borderlands, for example, to teach driver's training, instruction probably is in the native languages, not Russian. Russian language textbooks cannot be used under these circumstances.

Respondents observe that one can commonly find minorities, particularly Central Asians

¹The Voluntary Organization for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force, and Navy.

and Caucasians, serving as drivers of trucks and other support vehicles in combat and construction units. We surmise that many are trained in this specialty by DOSAAF.

IN-SERVICE MILITARY TRAINING

Access to technical training for non-Slavs seems to be limited to those with a sound knowledge of the Russian language. Our respondents were unable to identify any official restrictions or quotas aimed at limiting the number of minorities who receive advanced training in the operation or maintenance of military equipment. Reports about the number of non-Slavs in a particular unit, although random, strongly indicate that the kind of inherent limitations, especially language, that help to determine highly segregated stationing patterns mentioned earlier also operate to limit dramatically the numbers of minorities, again especially Central Asians and Caucasians, undergoing advanced military training. For a member of a minority group to attend one of these schools, he must speak Russian without difficulty and must be acceptable in all other political and social respects. For example:

There were no non-Slavs in the technical communications training units in Syvtyuvkar. I encountered no non-Slavs in places where communications systems and engineering and technical guard systems had to be mastered.

At the special school of electronic systems for antiaircraft defense at Gatchin, there were only a handful of non-Slavs among the students. These minorities had a very high educational level.

The majority of soldiers at the Regiment Aviation School in Petrozavodsk were Russians from the Leningrad area. About twenty people—mostly Udmurts and Chuvash from the Volga region, and eight Latvians—were the only non-Slavs.

In the junior aviation technical specialist school at Gurievsk, there were almost no minorities. Because the educational and cultural levels of the people who live in big cities are higher, and because these aviation units require the services of technically oriented and smart people, Central Asians are unlikely to be selected for these units. Our unit had one or two people from the Baltic area, a Georgian who had lived in Moscow and finished technical school there, and a Kazakh who had been expelled from Frunze Technical Institute in his third or fourth year of study. In all, there were no more than 10-percent non-Slavs. Everyone at the school spoke Russian perfectly well, although some with accents.

Of particular interest is the technical school for junior flight mechanics and radio operators at Krasnoyarsk, which apparently trains an unusually high number of Central Asian students, as described by one respondent:

There are roughly 2500 students there—twelve companies, 150 each. About 50 percent are Russians from Leningrad, and all had finished high school. Another 30 percent come from the Ukraine. About 15 percent are Central Asians, and the rest leftovers—Latvians, Lithuanians, but no Estonians, and only a very few from the Caucasus.

This respondent goes on to say that more than half of these trainees are sent abroad, to Soviet units stationed in Eastern Europe, because Krasnoyarsk is the only school in the USSR that trains mechanics and technicians of this type.

MILITARY SCHOOLS AND ACADEMIES

The Soviet armed forces operate a number of military schools and academies whose aim is to train students in a military specialty, such as infantry, artillery, or communications, and to grant them commissions upon graduation. The two major pathways to entrance in an institution of this kind are either by direct selection at the time of conscription or by moving

up through the ranks, usually after completing sergeants' school. Many respondents insist that there is yet a third way to gain entrance to military schools—especially the prestigious ones—namely, through personal connections and bribery.

Respondents who attended schools and academies unanimously point to the paucity of minority students, that is, non-Slavs. Nearly everyone dismisses the notion of quotas, and many insist that it is much easier for a non-Slav to attend a military school than it is for a Slav. This would seem to be the case, as considerable evidence suggests something akin to an active "affirmative action" policy for enrolling students from non-Slavic peoples. A former political officer who served as secretary of a regimental Komsomol committee explains how the system works, and notes that the only restrictions on minorities that he is aware of prohibit the enrollment of those "whose nationalities are the same as those of the member countries of the NATO bloc," which he interpreted to mean Jews and Germans:

Secret directives, sent by secret mail, are issued by the republic recruiting office and by the Komsomol Central Committee of that republic. These directives contain schedules that are called "About Drafting of Officers to Military Schools." For example, they say that this year the recruiting office and the Komsomol committee should send a certain number of people to military schools. For example, in 1979 I was supposed to send from the City Committee [in a major Baltic City] seven people to study in military schools. These candidates had to conform to certain educational and political criteria. In addition, the directive said that out of the seven people, two had to be "of native nationality."

A Crimean Tatar from Central Asia underlines this effort by military authorities to enroll minority students:

When an Uzbek gets his certificate of graduation from a school, he can come into a recruiting office and read advertisements like "The Ulianov Tank Military School Announces Openings for . . ." or the Moscow Military School, the Tashkent Aviation School, etc. He is welcome to try for any one of them.

A former naval officer claims that in order to entice non-Slavs into naval schools, enrollment standards are lowered and minority students are often allowed to take entrance examinations in their native languages. This picture of minority treatment contrasts sharply with a more widely held view of naval military schools being the most selective and the most difficult to enter without an exceptional performance record and personal connections.

A second channel, coming up through the ranks, also appears to offer real opportunities for non-Slavic servicemen to become officers by attending a military school. A number of former members of construction battalions, which tend to be heavily non-Slavic, indicated that shortly before discharge, they were encouraged by their commanders to accept placement in a sergeants' school. Upon graduation from the sergeants' course, they were promised admission to military schools for officers or warrant officers. This, however, may be a special case relevant only to the construction troops.

As an added inducement, some military schools are located in minority areas, such as in Tashkent and Tbilisi, although the great majority are in the Slavic areas. According to those with firsthand experience, these native area military schools try to enroll their own nationalities, probably as a means of easing non-Slavs into a heavily Slavic officer corps.

Despite special inducements and efforts to bring non-Slavs up from the ranks, all respondents with experience at military schools or academies point to the paucity of non-Slav officers who enroll or graduate. The former political officer mentioned earlier claims that he never was able to fill his quota of "native nationalities"—that Balts, for instance, as a rule wished to have nothing to do with Soviet military institutions. The Crimean Tatar made similar observations concerning Central Asian youth:

Due to historical traditions in Uzbek society, almost no one wants a military career. Actually, none of my Uzbek acquaintances wanted a military career or to serve in the armed forces.

Moreover, enrollment in a military school, which implies a distinct career choice, requires major psychological concessions for many non-Slavs. A Daghestani observed that "military education is, of course, easier for Slavs. If a person wants to become completely russified, then all roads are open to him. But due to various reasons, not everyone is willing to do it." The necessity for complete russification is borne out by other observers in our sample, who insist that when (rarely) one does come across a minority officer, he differs little from a Russian, inasmuch as his military school education leaves him with a strong stamp of Russian culture.

Some respondents with military school experience indicate that, despite special inducements to minorities, entrance to a military school still requires that the applicant pass rigorous examinations, especially in the Russian language, which many non-Slavs, if not most, fail. Although this certainly is a factor in limiting the number of qualified minority applicants, the main theme to emerge from the interviews on this point is that personal choice is even more limiting. For a variety of reasons, non-Slavs choose not to participate in military education and, hence, in the career military, despite official efforts to encourage participation.

Military training for construction troops, that is, for soldiers who are drawn primarily from Central Asian and Caucasian conscripts, can be described as rudimentary at best. All interviewees unequivocally indicate that most *stroibat* recruits are denied access to weapons, even to rifles and submachine guns. The following comments from construction troop personnel are typical:

The most important reason why minorities are sent to construction troops is loyalty. People from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and the entire group of Central Asians are not given arms. . . . They are not armed and have no drills.

A construction unit is considered to be a noncombat unit. These soldiers take the military oath with a rifle, but that's the extent of their access to weapons.

In our *stroibat* in Teykovo, we had no arms at all. A couple of times I was on duty at headquarters, but even there they did not give me a weapon, not even a bayonet. We had no carbines, no pistols; not a single officer had a pistol. They had an experiment in a nearby unit. They gave one guy who was on guard duty a gun and he shot himself right away. After that, they wouldn't issue guns to anyone.

None of us "military builders" ever held a weapon in our hands, except during the oath-taking ceremony. At that time we were given one rifle for 40 people to use. Of course, these rifles wouldn't shoot.

The Western Ukrainians in our unit never received military training. They could not shoot; they did not know how a rifle operates.

In our entire [construction] company, we had maybe ten rifles. These were for when we worked in the woods and had to shoot animals.

In my construction battalion in Tashkent, we never saw any machine guns, pistols, or rifles—nothing. There were no shooting exercises and we were never taught how to shoot. Only during the basic training were we given a submachine gun, shown its different parts, and how to assemble and disassemble it. The whole thing lasted four hours, and we had no military training afterward. All we had basically was just picks and shovels.

In my entire service I did not hold a single gun in my hands. Even when we took the military oath which is normally done holding a machine gun, we were without arms. I never fired a single shot. The only arms we had were bayonets and they were purely for decoration. Our only military training consisted of some marching drills at the beginning of the service. We were not shown any weapons, nor was it explained to us how they function. So evidently, we were not at all meant to be at the front.

Soldiers in my unit were given very weak military training. While I was their company commander they did not have any personal weapons and didn't know how to use them. One of the reasons they are not trusted with weapons is the very poor discipline in the *stroibat*.

It is obvious from these quotations that construction troop recruits, the majority of whom are non-Slavic minorities, remain little more than civilians in uniform with no appreciable military skills. Thus, a large part of the Soviet armed forces—perhaps as much as 20 percent—can be said to be unarmed.

VI. LANGUAGE

Russian is the language of command in the Soviet armed forces. All commands are given, training conducted, and orders written in Russian. All training and propaganda materials directed at soldiers of all nationalities are printed in Russian. All verbal instruction is supposed to be in Russian. Officers speak only Russian, and the few non-Slavs who become officers are chosen mainly for their ability to command that language.

Observations on the general Russian language abilities of various non-Russian servicemen differ from respondent to respondent depending upon his own service experiences and the minorities with whom he had contact. Several clear patterns do emerge, however.

First, non-Russian Slavs (Ukrainians and Belorussians) are said to have little difficulty with Russian. Eastern Ukrainians are generally agreed to be the most skilled in Russian. Among the Slavs, the Western Ukrainians seem to be the least fluent.

Second, Central Asians and Kazakhs are considered to have the least ability in Russian. Many respondents observed that Central Asians with whom they served, usually in construction and support or the MVD units, often could speak no Russian whatsoever upon induction. North Caucasians (except Ossetins), Azerbaidzhanis, Daghestanis, and Moldavians are thought to be only marginally better, but these nationalities, too, often send young men for induction who have little or no previous knowledge of the Russian language, especially those from rural areas.

Third, in all national regions of the USSR, a strong urban-rural dichotomy exists. In general, urban-raised youth are likely to be more skilled in Russian than rural youth, sometimes dramatically so. The dichotomy is less severe, but not unknown, in the Ukraine and Belorussia, where most rural youth have had some exposure to Russian. In Central Asia the problem is most severe, with rural youth often having had no Russian language training.

Fourth, language would appear to be one of the decisive determinants in the decision to station some conscripts in combat roles and in technologically demanding positions and to relegate others to construction and support units. For example, several respondents recalled serving in high-technology services with such minorities as Central Asians, Armenians, and Georgians. In all cases, the non-Slav's ability to speak Russian well is noted. For example:

In our SRF training unit in the Ukraine, there were four Uzbeks who were educated and spoke excellent Russian. One was an engineer by profession, had graduated from college, and for that reason was the operator of System A—a rather responsible position. He was a soldier, not an officer. Another Uzbek was a driver. The other two served in the firing battery. They spoke excellent Russian.

Other respondents who served in construction or support units commented on the presence of a majority of ethnics, whose Russian was marginal, thereby eliminating them from consideration for more challenging assignments. The determination about a conscript's Russian language ability probably takes place at the *voenkomat*.

ENFORCEMENT

Although Soviet policy calls for the use of Russian throughout the armed forces, this is not so in practice. As a rule, combat units do observe the Russian-only requirement, at least

in formation. Several respondents from motorized infantry units claim that punishment for using languages other than Russian in their units was approved and enforced, a transgression usually resulting in several days in the "penalty room." Several young combat officers recalled receiving orders from their superior officers to condemn the use of non-Russian languages and to mete out punishment whenever possible, although they were to deliver this instruction to their troops "in the form of an expressed wish, not as an order," to avoid head-on confrontations.

Nearly all respondents agreed, however, that the Russian-only rule could be enforced only "in formation," that once away from officers and sergeants, minority soldiers could, and usually did, revert to their own languages. In construction units, where large concentrations of minorities can be found, no attempt is made to restrict the use of non-Russian languages, occasionally even in formation. Interpreters are often required. For example:

In the construction battalions that came into our area, about 30 percent of the sergeants were Central Asians. The soldiers from Central Asia spoke little or no Russian, so they tried to find sergeants who could speak the native languages.

Those who know Russian better can be promoted to become sergeants in construction battalions. They serve as a link between Russians and minorities whose knowledge of the language is very poor. If you don't know Russian, you can't be promoted; you remain at a very low level.

When we were taking the military oath in the construction battalion, one Uzbek, a sergeant, was reading in Russian and another, who did not know the language, was repeating after him. Then the one who did not know the language signed the paper without knowing what it was.

Construction battalions have sergeants who understand Russian and can serve as interpreters for those who are drafted from beyond the Urals, where knowledge of Russian is almost nonexistent. The sergeant is usually an educated person with good Russian.

Others report that, while uncommon, minority sergeants or officers deliver lectures and instructions in non-Russian languages.

All permanent written materials, usually housed in a unit's "Lenin Room," are in Russian. Non-Russian language materials are prohibited. On the other hand, depending on the personal desires of the commanding officer, minority soldiers may subscribe to non-Russian newspapers and periodicals to be delivered to them in the unit. Respondents agree that these subscription materials and those in the "Lenin Room" are central newspapers and periodicals, such as *Pravda* and regional equivalents, all-Union journals, and military media of various kinds. Local publications are not allowed, although some do find their way into the unit through the mail. Several respondents insist that their commanding officers ordered non-Russian materials, ostensibly for the minorities; in fact, these purchases probably are part of subscription drives in which the unit participates. In any event, the cost of the subscription is deducted from the soldier's savings account.

The military reasons for insisting on a single language of command are obvious, but several interviewees noted another reason as well. This description by a former sergeant of Central Asian origin is typical:

Minorities could speak their languages freely in our construction battalion in Tashkent, but only among themselves. Sometimes, senior officers would come up to them and say, "Listen, speak only in Russian; we want to know what you are talking about." They may have thought the minorities were discussing some plot against them.

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Because an ability to use the Russian language stands out as a key variable for integrating non-Russian speaking minorities more completely into the Soviet armed forces, one would

assume that effective language training, especially classroom instruction, would be an essential precondition to other kinds of military training. However, this does not appear to be the case. Not a single member of our sample—embracing a wide range of service specialties, ranks, nationalities, and stationing experiences—could identify anything resembling a Russian language instruction class for non-Russian speakers at any time during his service. None had ever participated in one, known others who had, or heard of the existence of one.

Rather than formal in-service Russian language training for non-Russian speakers, the Soviet armed forces rely on a Russian intensive environment to bring minorities up to an acceptable level of working Russian. Nearly all respondents agree that this approach does result in minorities achieving a basic working understanding of Russian, usually by the end of one year's service. Typical are these reports:

In our construction battalion in Astrakhan, the officers and sergeants used only Russian. Uzbeks and Abkhazians had to speak Russian too, including those from remote villages and collective farms who could speak no more than two or three words when they arrived here. Gradually, they learned to survive.

Toward the end of their service, Uzbeks in our *stroibat* learned to speak some Russian, though they never spoke it well.

Uzbeks, Armenians, and many other minorities in our unit spoke no Russian at all when they were drafted. They understood nothing. They learned some Russian in the army. However, even during the second year of service, their Russian was not too good.

All Uzbeks and Tadzhiks [with whom I served] could understand Russian but spoke it poorly. They study Russian in [civilian] schools, even in the villages—everywhere in Russia. In Uzbek schools they study Russian as a foreign language. Tadzhiks also speak Russian, though barely.

Interviewees insist that non-Russians, including Central Asians, Azerbaidzhanis, and North Caucasians, can communicate sufficiently well in Russian after some months to perform routine tasks. Most respondents explained the ability of even those recruits with no previous Russian training to function in that language on the basis of a rudimentary knowledge of the relevant military vocabulary.

Those who enter service with greater exposure to Russian, such as non-Russian Slavs, Balts, and urban youth, not surprisingly, come out with the greatest facility in the end. Central Asians, many Caucasians, and North Caucasians, as a rule, fare less well, probably because they are concentrated together in units where they can speak their native languages without fear of punishment.

Of course, teaching Russian to non-Russians is one of the avowed goals of the Soviet military. This goal is consonant with overall Soviet language policy to instruct all nationalities in the Russian language, thereby facilitating their ability to function in a Russian-dominated society and to facilitate their acceptance of Russian culture—a process usually referred to as russification, although Soviet authorities put it somewhat more delicately. Although it is clear from our sample that some minority soldiers leave service with little more ability in Russian than they brought with them, in the majority of cases the basic objective of training non-Russians to communicate in that language is met, even if communications necessarily must be conducted at a primitive level.

Aware that the "kitchen Russian" learned by the non-Russian speaking recruit was likely to be inadequate for the job, Soviet military authorities apparently sought to institute official Russian language training programs beginning in 1975. A former political officer recalls a directive that reached his unit in late 1975 dealing with the language issue. This officer stresses that it was a directive, that is, from a political department or other agency, and not a command from the commanding officer. According to this directive, courses in the

Russian language were to be established for minorities; lessons were to be held once a week outside of working hours. However, the directive was said to have been about "the basic aspects of the problem only." No specific orders were given to implement it, without which, according to the political officer, nothing could be initiated. No decisions were made about who would teach the classes, pay the instructors, or designate study schedules. The officer indicated that this directive was evidence that the armed forces hierarchy was aware of the language problem among minorities, although he does not know if specific measures were ever taken to put the directive into effect. None of our respondents could confirm that any new measures of this kind had been initiated in the last few years.

OTHER LINGUA FRANCAS

Soldiers from different language families occasionally are observed using Russian as a lingua franca, for example, if a Georgian speaks with a Tatar or a Kirghiz with an Armenian. More often than not, however, language barriers impose a de facto isolation on members of different language families and of non-Russians from Russians. In this sense, language reinforces the natural inclinations of the distinct groups of non-Russian soldiers to remain apart from others, to isolate themselves as much as possible from other soldiers they cannot or choose not to understand. Turkic language speakers (Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, and others) usually find common linguistic ground in one or several languages—often Uzbek. Georgians, Armenians, Moldavians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians remain very much isolated in groups because of their unique languages. Where a lingua franca is required, Russian is usually used.

LANGUAGE-RELATED PROBLEMS

We noted three main kinds of problems that are caused by the difficulties many minority servicemen have with the Russian language. The first concerns the problems some non-Russian speakers have in carrying out military tasks; the second, widespread dissimulation; and the third, social conflict caused by communications breakdown.

Observations by members of our sample regarding how well non-Russian speakers could carry out military assignments were mixed. Approximately three-quarters of the sample, including nearly all of the officers and sergeants, argue that an inadequate command of Russian leads to poor military performance and reinforces the highly dichotomous stationing patterns noted in Sec. III. However, one-quarter of the sample maintain that minorities who do not speak adequate Russian when inducted usually learn enough after one year to perform credibly those tasks they are asked to handle:

The minorities did not have difficulties fulfilling their duties because of their poor knowledge of Russian. They had been instructed so many times that they finally understood what they should be doing. Commanders would tell them over and over.

The language problem is a very serious one for minorities but I would not say that it was too difficult for them to fulfill their routine duties because of it. There were soldiers among them who spoke some Russian and they would translate. Also, they learned the commands by heart.

These respondents emphasize, however, that largely because of language and educational deficiencies, minorities who do not speak Russian well enough to impress their leaders with their overall competence as a rule are assigned less important, usually manual labor jobs.

Again, we emphasize that these respondents are speaking of the noncombat duties to which many minorities are routinely assigned; they are not referring to combat-related activities.

By far the largest part of our sample observed that minorities whose comprehension of Russian was inadequate, mostly Central Asians and Caucasians, could not carry out military duties effectively:

Because Central Asians do not speak Russian well, they were not assigned to important combat forces units. . . . When an order is given, it must be carried out precisely to the letter. These people, because they could not speak Russian, could not do this.

There were many minorities who could not carry out soldiers' functions because they did not know Russian. They could not understand what they were told, certain commands, and instructions.

It was very difficult for minorities in my unit who could not speak Russian, and many could not, to carry out their duties. They were not sent to guard duty, nor could they be assigned to a desk. They could not understand what was required of them, and they could not make a report if one was required.

The minorities in our minesweeper did not understand many Russian words. They could not fulfill commands even though the situation on ship required the immediate fulfillment of commands.

These respondents and others stress that Soviet military authorities, to their knowledge, had done nothing to correct this situation, other than detailing non-Russian speakers to noncombat-related, menial occupations.

All respondents who had served with non-Russian-speaking minorities reported the high incidence of dissimulation; even when non-Russians were known to have the linguistic skills sufficient to perform routine tasks, they often professed not to understand orders as a way to avoid undesirable or unwanted work. For example:

Caucasians in my construction battalion in Kazakhstan often pretended that they did not know Russian. Of course, they did. But they are freedom-loving people who do not want to be bossed around.

The Uzbeks in my training company always pretended not to understand Russian. They seem to believe that they would be able to avoid all the difficulties and problems if they let the authorities think that they did not understand orders.

Among the *churkas* in the motorized rifle regiment, there were very few who spoke Russian well. Some acted as if they did not understand anything at all. When they were given an order, they would say, "I don't understand." That is how they served. It was a complete mess.

Sometimes if they can stand the pressure from other soldiers, minorities pretend not to understand Russian right to the last day of their service.

There were some Caucasians who pretended that they did not know Russian. They were great specialists at this; they were like actors. Sometimes the authorities were able to catch them at it, but some would maintain this act to the very end of their service.

There was a Kazakh named Salimbekov in our unit, who, on arrival, was punished for something and told he would have to stand guard duty two extra times. He was supposed to say, "Aye-aye, sir," and turn around and come back to the formation. Instead he said, "I don't understand." Then the NCO said, "Four extra times on duty." Salimbekov said again, "I don't understand." This went on to six extra times on duty, at which point Salimbekov exploded (in Russian), "You have no right to do this."

The minorities pretend that they understand Russian very poorly. They take advantage of the situation. When given an order, they answer, "I don't understand," and then the authorities can't do anything to them. They just say, "You stupid *churka*, get out of here."

The significance of widespread language dissimulation should not be underestimated, as most respondents informed us. From the military planner's perspective, understanding that non-

Russians cannot or will not perform satisfactorily in Russian, that is, that they will dissimulate, is as important as the certain knowledge that they entirely lack capability in Russian. Several officers offered the opinion that dissimulation, in some respects, was worse than ignorance, inasmuch as the motives and loyalty of one who dissimulates must be held in question. Even if it was known that a soldier could understand basic commands but he denied it, Soviet officers and NCOs saw no other recourse than to assign him to duties where he could not seriously affect the unit's operations by his mistakes.

Language failure is the catalyst for or the source of social conflict between those who can and cannot speak Russian. Clearly, according to many respondents, conflict over the language issue simply disguises other kinds of conflict, particularly racial, about which more will be said in the next section. Those recruits who understand Russian the least—Turkic and Iranic Muslim Central Asians and Caucasians—are prime targets for official and unofficial ridicule. For example:

NCOs got very irritated when the minorities did not understand Russian. This was the basis of many conflicts. The sergeants insulted the minorities all the time, calling them *churkas*, *chernozhopy*, and other derogatory names.

Minority soldiers are oversensitive about not knowing the Russian language. It was painful for them. The Russians always jeer at them, and fights would break out.

By and large, it was very difficult for the *Natsmen* [see Glossary]. Because they didn't speak Russian, there was lots of unpleasantness and many problems. Always there was a lot of friction with other servicemen.

When you cannot communicate in Russian, you have a real problem. In our unit, if you couldn't do your job because of it, the other soldiers who thought that you were shirking would often beat you up.

Some respondents recall spending time in the brig for language offenses. Nearly all remember observing commanders and sergeants publicly criticize non-Russians—often with racial or national epithets—for communications failures. Fights between Russians and non-Russians touched off by language problems were said to be common.¹

¹The implications of the failure of officers, NCOs, and soldiers to comprehend Russian adequately to make low-level military integration a practical matter go beyond the Soviet armed forces. A recent Rand report notes a similar problem in the East German military, where each officer is expected to be able to use Russian proficiently, but where, in fact, this goal is far from being achieved. "On the basis of personal experience, former NPA officers were skeptical of the feasibility of using Russian as a command language in NPA-GSFG combined ground forces operations below the divisional level." See A. Ross Johnson, Robert W. Dean, and Alexander Alexiev, *East European Military Establishments: The Warsaw Pact Northern Tier*, The Rand Corporation, R-2417/1-AF/FF, December 1980, p. 86.

VII. INTERETHNIC RELATIONS

According to Soviet military propagandists, the Soviet armed forces function as an integrative mechanism through which the social consciousness of individuals and groups of diverse ethnic origins is elevated and homogenized to a "new Soviet man." The new *Homo Sovieticus* will have his nationality defenses stripped away and will come to see himself as part of a cohesive multinational community of like-minded peoples, whose underlying motivations are not "national narrow-mindedness" but "Soviet patriotism," a higher plane of human awareness at which the commonality of interests of all peoples of the USSR is taken for granted. Although some national distinctions of a cultural nature will remain in this ideal state, even these will be sublimated to "the friendship of peoples." This is the message of innumerable Soviet articles and books devoted to the nationality question.

We asked our respondents a variety of questions to determine how well or how poorly the Soviet military contributed to this goal. Based on their own service experiences and on what they know of their friends' experiences, they dealt with the issue of interethnic relations in the Soviet armed forces in considerable detail, providing both specific personal accounts of various facets of ethnic interaction and more generalized thoughts on the armed forces as a milieu conducive to breaking down ethnic self-awareness and self-assertiveness. Reports of this kind necessarily contain a subjective element. For example, former Soviet soldiers were asked to characterize their relationships with soldiers from other ethnic groups and, where possible, to generalize about the interaction of different ethnic groups themselves. Obviously, as with any analysis that seeks to encapsulate and to synthesize firsthand accounts into plausible and feasible generalizations, hard facts are difficult to come by. Instead, we can claim only to be able to present what appear to be observable trends and practices, based on similar or shared experiences by many former servicemen. We feel that there is sufficient reason to believe that our sample offers a fairly accurate portrait of ethnic relationships in the military, but until a more systematic method of accumulating and analyzing the information is devised, the above caveats are in order.

The clear consensus to emerge from these interviews is that in the Soviet peacetime armed forces, ethnic conflict is frequent, perhaps prevalent, and occasionally severe. In most cases, we believe that the Soviet armed forces fail to bring about a homogenization of interests and a leveling of ethnic consciousness. To the contrary, national distinctions in many cases, probably a majority, appear to be enhanced by military experience. Thus, one can conclude that, at best, service in the Soviet military does little to bring the diverse nationalities of the USSR together; at worst, it has the completely opposite effect, stimulating ethnic animosities that are not evident before military service.

This revelation should come as no surprise to anyone who has served in a multiethnic armed service, as both authors have. Extended close-quarter service frequently exacerbates relationships among individuals of different races, ethnic backgrounds, and linguistic families. In the Soviet case, it is hard to see how such common problems could be overcome especially in light of a pervasive if unofficial hierarchy based on national origin that is everywhere in evidence.

GROUPING TOGETHER

A common observation among our respondents is that nationalities tend to group together whenever possible. For example:

The minorities were more friendly among themselves than they were with Russians. They understood one another better. They were like brothers, relatives, and Russians were strangers to them.

The Muslims always spoke with each other in their native tongue and kept away from everyone else.

In my company there was a kind of subdivision into ethnic groups. Ukrainians were friendly only among themselves, like a separate group; they defended one another—a kind of fraternity. . . . The same can be said about Georgians, Armenians, etc.

Minorities are more friendly among themselves, particularly those from the Caucasus. They stick together and Russians are afraid of them. Central Asians band together too, but they are not as assertive.

National groups in the army form a kind of association of countrymen, the main purpose of which is to be in their own environment. There are no political bases for this except their dislike for the Russians. But this is not politics, it is nationalism.

Even in the barracks, soldiers try to form groups with others of their own nationality.

Minorities have their own lives. People gather in small groups, and there is no contact between them.

Always when you are granted a pass, you go with your own kind—your friends. If you are a Russian, with a Russian, Ukrainian with Ukrainian, a Kazakh with a Kazakh, never together.

Very few Russians have friends from the minority groups, whereas minorities are always together in groups.

Grouping together of nationalities helps to explain why conflict between individuals, whether ethnic-inspired or not, can and occasionally does lead to group conflict of an ethnic nature. In most cases, servicemen are supported by a ready contingent of their own countrymen. The potential for group violence is also increased by the induction system used to recruit and assign non-Russians to units (see Sec. II). It is common for ten or more individuals of the same ethnic background who speak the same language—and who, in fact, may even come from the same village or city—to end up in the same military unit. Thus, inherent distinctions, which might become diluted or disappear without psychological and physical support, are often reinforced.

On the other hand, grouping together may serve to prevent ethnic conflict by enforcing a relatively strict isolation on ethnic groups. Several respondents noted that no ethnic conflict occurred in their units because there was no contact between the different minority groups and the Russians.

The grouping together of non-Russians with coethnics is a common theme throughout the interview sample. In part, this is caused by cultural and linguistic ties, as noted above; and in part, this is caused by Russian treatment of non-Russians, as described below. But several respondents note an important temporal factor affecting ethnic clustering: Although it occurs almost universally among conscripts who serve their obligatory two- or three-year terms, those who serve by choice beyond their initial conscription or enlistment period rapidly come to place career advancement considerations ahead of ethnic ones; that is, they look beyond the ethnic prejudices of the one-term soldier. Moreover, it would appear that those non-Russians who continue their service beyond the first term tacitly agree to become russified. As such, they are themselves accepted to a much greater degree as equals in the ranks of Russians and other Slavs. One respondent stated:

After the first term of service, the relationship among nationalities becomes more equal; all become more equal; all become more like brothers. During the first term of service, Uzbeks make friends only with Uzbeks, Russians with Russians, Jews with Jews, and so forth. But in subsequent service, this is leveled out.

All respondents note, however, that the number of minorities who reenlist, except Eastern Ukrainians, is too small to verify their acquiescence to Russian language and culture. Indeed, it is the sine qua non for reenlistment.

NATIONAL STEREOTYPES

The same kind of national stereotypes that one encounters in the Soviet population as a whole can be found in servicemen from different ethnic backgrounds in the military, where in many instances the stereotypes are strengthened. For example, nearly all Russian and Jewish respondents in the sample pointed to the fierce independence and undisguised nationalism of Balts (Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians) in the armed forces. The interviews indicate a curious blend of reaction to Balts: a certain admiration or awe for their often-manifested hostility to all things Russian but at the same time an understated resentment for what are clearly perceived to be the Balts' high level of education, technical expertise, and discipline. For example:

There are frequent confrontations between Russians and Balts because some of the Balts speak Russian poorly or refuse to speak Russian. The Balts are also people who often do not hide their animosity toward Russians. The others, for example, the Central Asians, obviously don't like the Russians either but they seldom advertise it.

Basically, the Latvians I served with were anti-Russian. They hated the Russians and called them pigs when among themselves. They hated Russians who did not want to understand them, even though the Russians considered Balts to be different from everyone else. Commanding officers insulted the Latvians, often calling them fascists. The Latvians resented that and were strongly nationalistic.

The Estonians considered themselves superior to the Russians and often manifested their contempt for them. They always mocked the Russians and tried to keep as far from them as possible.

Officers respected soldiers from the Baltic states because the latter have a good sense of discipline and their educational level is quite high, but did not like them.

The soldiers from the Baltic republics were very aggressive and proud and did not associate with anybody else. They blamed the Russians for occupying their country and suppressing their freedom. They thought that they were superior people.

I have rarely seen such a deep devotion to one another. They try as a national group to be together at all times. They were very good in the military service, absolutely impeccable soldiers, and very disciplined. Russians respected the Balts because they are strong and very European, although the Balts absolutely hated the Russians. The Russians I served with felt a sort of inferiority complex toward them.

The Russian attitude toward the Balts is different. They seem too educated, too neat, too German-like. They behave differently and speak differently. There is something foreign about them, something not Soviet. They always protect one another. One always distrusts them.

As noted below, many of these same observations characterize the relationships between Soviet soldiers and the Baltic nonmilitary population.

Ukrainian servicemen, particularly those from Eastern Ukraine, as noted in Sec. IV, are also widely believed to display distinctive characteristics, such as military bearing, career-

ism, and an affinity for command. North Caucasians, especially Chechens and Daghestanis, are universally considered violent, unpredictable, undisciplined, and anti-Russian. With the exception of Central Asians and some other Soviet Muslim peoples, impressions of servicemen of other nationalities are mixed; no clear characterizations emerge. Central Asians and other Muslim peoples are routinely and indiscriminately lumped together by most of the members of our sample. As will become clearer later in this report, attitudes toward them have strong and explicit racial overtones, as Central Asians are portrayed as lazy, stupid, primitive, and unreliable.

RACISM

From the interviews, it is clear that discrimination directed against Soviet Muslim peoples and, occasionally, against Georgians and Armenians, is multifaceted and complex, combining in itself cultural, historic, ethnic, linguistic, and racial factors. A prime factor is that many Soviet Muslims are dark skinned and hence stand out in vivid contrast to the white-skinned Slavs.

The great majority of respondents explicitly or implicitly supported the Russians' and other Slavs' feeling of racial superiority toward Soviet Asian peoples, a feeling that is captured in the racial epithets used by the former when describing or conversing with the latter (see Glossary). Racist attitudes frequently translate into real discriminatory practices toward Soviet Asians in the ranks. Respondents give these typical illustrations:

From the beginning we, the white people, considered ourselves somewhat higher and with more privileges than the *churkas*. . . . Words speak for themselves. That is why, when it is necessary to do some unpleasant work, say, clean a toilet, a Kazakh would be sent and the Russians would make him do it. . . . It was the same at all levels. At a table in the military dining room, Russians always take the first turn. Kazakhs and Uzbeks always the last. First, we will eat, then they. The same holds true for who is going to sleep where. Kazakhs and Uzbeks will be sent to the most uncomfortable corner. . . . This is done by the soldiers themselves. It has always been this way in the army. If I worked with a screwdriver, the Central Asian works with a shovel.

Sergeants and NCOs are the toughest with the minorities. They can be cruel and even sadistic toward Central Asians. They sincerely believe that Russians are superior to Uzbeks. This creates a lot of tension in the units. They give minorities the bad jobs and the extra guard duty.

Soldiers and NCOs would insult Uzbeks and Tadzhiks right in their faces by calling them *chernozhopy* [black asses] and *kosoglazyi* [slant eyes].

Uzbeks and Turkmen have dark-colored skin. People often called them Negroes to their faces.

There were two Kazakh Tatars in our squadron of the air defense brigade. The other soldiers did not like them and jeered at them. They knew the Tatars did not eat pork, so one Russian would put a pig's ear in a Tatar's soup. Or they would put a foot cloth on his head while he was sleeping. They would make the Tatar guy do all the dirty work, like clean toilets, and so forth, just because he was a Tatar.

Of course, everyone treated the *chuchmeks* with contempt. Normally, these Asians are very bad soldiers. . . . People treated them with contempt because *chuchmeks* are something like a lower race to Russians and Ukrainians. They are not strong physically; they are very stupid. They couldn't handle equipment. Moldavians are this way too.

Not all respondents witnessed overt racial discrimination; in fact, several—all from high-technology units—claimed that they had not observed any. They give several reasons. First, minorities, especially Soviet Asians, are few in these units. Second, minorities in high-technology positions are usually well integrated into the dominant Russian orientation of the

unit. Third, high-technology units tend to be highly staffed, with many junior and senior officers very much in evidence who are unwilling to tolerate behavior that may be common in infantry or construction units. As a general rule, according to these respondents, both racism and open ethnic conflict (see below) do not appear to be serious problems in units of this kind.

Significantly, Soviet officers seldom engaged in overtly discriminatory or racist behavior or displayed attitudes of this kind—at least not in public. Several former junior officers noted that all junior officers are warned explicitly against such behavior. One Russian private offered this typical explanation:

As far as junior officers are concerned, if a soldier does not insult them, does not touch them at all, then nationality does not matter, even if that soldier has done something wrong. Sometimes, a young lieutenant will say something like, "Hey you! You can do that in Uzbekistan but not here." However, a captain or a major would never dare to say this. This is personal. Talking among themselves, officers and sergeants often are overheard to say something like, "What do you think of that *chernozhopa*?" But there is no official talk like this, especially not in formation.

Judging from our respondents, one would have to conclude that racism or racially motivated behavior are prominent characteristics of ethnic interaction in the Soviet armed forces. There can be little doubt that Slavic attitudes of racial superiority toward Soviet Asians and the tangible manifestations of these attitudes are at the bottom of a good deal of the violent conflict described below. Obviously, attitudes and behavior of this kind prevent or impede the development of the "internationalist" consciousness Soviet leaders trumpet publicly. Although it is difficult to determine how Soviet military authorities might combat racism in the ranks, our respondents were hard-pressed to provide evidence of a leadership commitment to do anything about it.

A number of large modern armies, including the U.S. armed forces, have racial difficulties; therefore, one should be cautious about generalizing in the Soviet case without first having made some careful comparisons. Such comparisons are far beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, we feel confident in speculating that racism in the Soviet armed forces is prevalent and unchecked to an extent unknown in the U.S. forces. The clear picture we receive from our interviews is of a military establishment in which racial segregation has both social and functional manifestations and in which racial discrimination is accepted and routinized, perhaps to an unprecedented degree.

VIOLENT ETHNIC CONFLICT

Slightly more than half of our respondents participated in, witnessed, or knew someone who had engaged in violent conflict attributable to ethnic tensions. Open ethnic conflict by and against individuals and groups does occur with apparent frequency in the Soviet armed forces, but it would be premature to generalize on the basis of our interview sample—and without adequate comparative research—that the Soviet armed forces experience more or less violent ethnic-based conflict than other large-scale multinational armies.

However, we can safely make four generalizations about the character of violent ethnic conflict in the Soviet armed forces. First, high-technology services (Air Force, Navy, SRF), in which there are relatively few non-Slavs and many staff officers, appear to experience little violence of an ethnic nature. In these branches, the relative ethnic homogeneity and the abundance of officers tend to limit outbreaks of ethnic conflicts.

Second, in combat units in the Ground Forces, in which small concentrations of non-

Slavs face sizable concentrations of Slavs, ethnic-related violence probably occurs more frequently than in other service situations. A number of factors seem to encourage the outbreak of ethnic violence in units of this type more frequently than in others. Minority soldiers, because they are few in number, make easy targets for abuse by Slavs, although it is by no means the case that Slavs instigate all of the trouble, as will become clearer in the examples that follow. The "buyer" system of military recruitment probably adds to the potential for ethnic conflict by allowing small concentrations of the same minority—who often are brought from the same *voenkomat* and, hence, often from the same district or even village—to come together in combat units where they readily support one another. Thus, some units will house a few minorities, but these soldiers are likely to be, for example, all Uzbeks or Adygei who have known each other or lived in the same district.

Third, construction units, which usually have a high percentage of minorities relative to Slavs, appear to experience less individual ethnic violence than combat units, although it is not unknown for non-Slavs to fight among themselves. Construction units do occasionally engage in violent confrontations with combat units where Slavs predominate, however, lending conflict a mass character. Here again, one should be cautious about imputing frequency to situations of this kind. Rather, without more detailed research, we can only assert that, based on what we have learned from our respondents, the potential for confrontation of this kind is always present and that numerous instances of known mass ethnic conflict suggest that the possibilities for future turmoil are very real. The following examples from our respondents illustrate these points:

The Adygei in our paratroop unit treated Russians as enemies, and vice versa. Everyone hated the Adygei. Shortly after they arrived in the unit, some soldiers beat the Adygei up very badly. . . . The Adygei did not know what authority meant; a sergeant or a lieutenant was nothing to them. . . . The antagonism between the Adygei and the Ukrainian sergeants was particularly strong and violent.

In an artillery warehouse unit near Murom there was a very severe fight involving about 35 to 40 people. The situation developed over several weeks, with Russians and Ukrainians on one side, and Daghestanis and some other Central Asians on the other. It finally came to a big fight, with many injuries which was investigated very thoroughly.

I participated in a big fight in a radio reconnaissance regiment near Riga between Russians and Tatars. Because of some trifle, a Russian and a Tatar began fighting. A Tatar spread the word that one of his own was being beaten. The others turned out, and the fight turned into a major incident.

A Kazakh from my unit [a mortar company] had a girlfriend in the village. A Russian guy won her from the Kazakh. A bunch of Kazakhs went into his barracks and beat the Russian up time after time. Finally, the Russians retaliated. A group of them went into the Kazakh barracks and smashed everything, beat a lot of Kazakhs, and crippled 15 of them. It was very serious. It was like a mutiny. Officers from the division came, and there was a big fuss. But they couldn't punish anybody, and closed the case.

Fights, even with arms, went on all the time at the top-secret nuclear installation near Tomsk with *churkas* from the nearby construction battalions.

This Vikhresku [a Moldavian] was a bright and talented guy, a musician and a poet. One day another Moldavian soldier was badly beaten by a Russian lieutenant. Several of his ribs were broken, and he was sent to a medical unit. Vikhresku caught up with the lieutenant and killed him with a machine gun. After that, he set fire to headquarters and shot himself.

A young Uzbek soldier whom everyone picked on because he was racially and culturally different finally had enough. One day when he was supposed to go on guard duty, he took a machine gun from the rack and ambushed the entire guard detail, killing several and wounding many of the rest. The *churka* should have killed them all, but he was a terrible shot.

People from Central Asia display their disobedience as a form of sabotage. . . . We had a case in the Tamansk Division in Volokolamsk near Moscow. It was a model division. It included Regi-

ment 130, which is shown to foreigners. . . . Two Central Asians beat regular soldiers to get their Kalashnikov machine guns, discs, and cartridges, and off they went. . . . They walked all through Russia with these machine guns. Finally, they were caught, and there was an exchange of fire, and they were killed. But they had managed to get all the way to Saratov! Special troops were raised to hunt them down; the forests were combed. They had been mistreated so many times that their patience was exhausted, so they set off for home.

The soldiers from Kabardino-Balkaria are the wildest people. One I knew broke the head of an officer with a chair and went to bed as if nothing had happened. Many of them ended up in the disciplinary battalions because of such behavior.

There was constant tension between the Latvians in our unit and the Central Asians. After a particularly vicious and insulting verbal attack on the Central Asians, the Latvians were attacked with knives, and a slaughter ensued. This conflict went on for several months before it could be brought to a stop, and many people were injured. The officers were aware of the problem, of course, but they would do nothing. They can't put everyone in the brig, for if they did, high-level authorities at the division would find out, which is not good for their service records. So they try to hide such conflicts.

On the train going to join our unit there were many big fights between the Estonians and those from Central Russia.

In our training unit in Novosibirsk, there was a huge fight between Russians and Azerbaidzhanis. One day during a political lecture some Azeris began to shout so it was impossible to hear what was being said by the lecturers. Everyone was punished, the Russians along with the Azeris. Three days later there was a big fight in the barracks because of this—a very serious fight between the Russians and Azeris. All the beds and night tables were broken. The Russian officers were afraid to come into the barracks. There was no winner, but there were many serious injuries.

There were many big fights based on nationality differences. Someone insulted someone else, then a fight would occur, then other people would join in because they wanted to protect their fellow countrymen. These fights often grew very large.

More ethnic frictions developed in my unit when people of one nationality made up the bulk of the call-up. For example, once the majority of the call-up was Ukrainian. They were very friendly among themselves and protected one another. But they insulted everyone else. Fights occurred often.

A Russian guard I knew was at the entrance to regiment headquarters one day. Several Georgians tried to get into the building to talk to a girl they knew who was the switchboard operator. They were drunk. The soldier gave them a warning, then shot and wounded one of the Georgians. He was right to do this, but he was arrested anyway. He told me, "Those black suckers. They want to date our girls."

When I was in the construction battalion in Vladimir, Uzbeks fought everyone else. Somebody made a joke about three months after a bunch of Uzbeks from the "wild division" arrived in the battalion. In a place where they clean boots, the jokester wrote, "For Blacks Only." And in the place where they wash their hands and faces he wrote, "For Whites Only." The Uzbeks attacked everyone who was not from Central Asia. There was strict subdivision into groups: on one side the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Tadzhiks; on the other, the Europeans—Russians, Azerbaidzhanis, and Chechens. Knives and various metal items were used. Seven people were killed. The way it happened was like this. The Uzbeks came into the others' barracks at night when they were asleep. After they left, the young company commander told the non-Uzbek group to take crowbars from the fireboard and to stand next to the door. He told them, "If somebody enters, hit him with the crowbar. I'll be responsible for this." Two Uzbeks came again and were killed immediately.

We had fights in our artillery battalion near Sevastopol all the time, often from racial conflicts. A *chuchmek* could be beaten up very badly just because he was a *chuchmek*.

In Petrozavodsk at the regiment aviation school, a Ukrainian sergeant—Kolesnichenko, I think—insulted the Chuvash very often. There were also many Tatars there in the construction battalion and one of them took the side of the Chuvash. He hit the sergeant in the face, more people came, and a big fight broke out. The authorities did not want to interfere and only

the Chuvash, the victims, were punished. They were all sent to the stockade where other sergeants and escort soldiers beat them up severely.

I was on watch once with an Uzbek when some Russian called him "dumb Uzbek." Uzbeks always carry a Finnish knife. This Uzbek told me he was going to kill the Russian, and he did it that night. The Russian died. The Uzbek cut off his shoulder straps and threw them away. He also took the Russian's rifle and threw it into the snow. This happened in Leningrad.

One day the Abkhazians began insulting our people [Russians]. There was a big fight. Our company commander didn't take any measures.

According to many respondents, officers at all levels avoid becoming embroiled in ethnic or racial disputes among their men. "If an officer interferes in nationality-related conflict," noted a former Armenian soldier, "he always finds himself in an awkward situation, as the officers inevitably are Russians who cannot choose sides in a conflict of this kind without causing serious problems." Other respondents echoed this explanation, noting that military authorities generally attempt to ignore ethnic conflicts in the ranks. Military authorities "are not tuned" to ethnic problems in the ranks, many respondents remarked, for the simple reason that if they attempted to intervene in conflicts of this nature, it would be a tacit admission that a problem exists in their command. Some respondents believe that military commanders saw interference in ethnic conflict as an admission that their attempts to mold their subordinates into an ethnically harmonious force had failed—hence, their reticence to address this issue. Others noted the implications for career advancement for officers whose service file cited the subject's inability to keep ethnic dissent under control in his unit.

RELATIONS BETWEEN NON-RUSSIANS

Our respondents recalled fewer indications or incidents of ethnic dissent or violence directed by non-Russians at other non-Russians. Where incidents could be recalled, in many cases the protagonists were Georgians and Armenians, and occasionally Armenians and Azerbaidzhanis. Although fights involving individuals of these nationalities were reported, there appear to be few or no mass confrontations of the scope of those between Russians and Central Asians. Two respondents observed occasional fighting among Central Asians in the construction battalions in which they served, but noted that these were usually not violent or enduring conflicts. Another respondent observed what appeared to him to be the elevated social status of Turkmen among the Central Asians in his construction battalion, and that this distinction sometimes led to short-lived clashes between individual Turkmen and Kazakhs and Kirghiz. Significantly—and this underlines the racial motives in clashes of this kind—Balts and Central Asians who serve together often come into conflict.

As we noted earlier when discussing the banding together of various nationalities, the Soviet military milieu encourages individuals of the same ethnic group and even kindred ethnic groups to cooperate and support one another in what they perceive to be a hostile social environment. A Central Asian explained it this way:

The attitude of the Uzbeks and Tatars toward one another was very good. We had the feeling of friendship and mutual help because we were all Muslims. . . . We, the minorities, did not tell each other something like this: "I hate the Soviet power. I am against the Soviet system." But we tried to be friendly only among ourselves. We understood each other's language, and we tried to speak only our native language in front of those Russian guys.

Yet, it would be inaccurate to assume that this same spirit of kinship grips all Soviet Muslim peoples equally. Several respondents report the contempt of Muslims of the North Caucasus

for Central Asians, ostensibly because the latter are weak and acquiescent to Russian demands and reticent to fight for their pride. For example, one respondent noted that "Chechens are better soldiers than Uzbeks or Tadzhiks. They never make friends with them. They are more nationalistic and arrogant and wild. You can say something to an Uzbek or an Azerbaidzhani that you would never dare say to a Chechen, because a Chechen would use his knife and kill you." Others recalled that North Caucasians, and Chechens in particular, seldom sided with Central Asian Muslims during conflicts, and, in fact, they often fought with them.

Several young officers offered the following provocative assessment of the official attitude toward conflict among non-Russians: Conflict is to be encouraged rather than controlled. Explained two former lieutenants:

Authorities encourage these interethnic hostilities because it is easier for them to control a multinational society in which people of different nationalities do not understand one another. They wouldn't be secure if, for example, Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaidzhanis lived in harmony. Some officers receive political instruction in this policy; it is sufficient if only a few officers in a regiment know of it.

The tendency is such that in order to improve control over soldiers, conflicts among them must be encouraged in every possible way. The most important goal is to avoid any feelings of solidarity by soldiers of different nationalities. There are no instructions or directions to this effect, or at least I received none. But one knows that it must be done this way.

From this sample of respondents, we cannot estimate how prevalent practices of this kind may be in the Soviet armed forces. If practiced by even a few officers in each unit, however, this kind of behavior would have important consequences for the Soviets' professed goal of turning the armed forces into "schools of brotherhood."

RELATIONS BETWEEN SOLDIERS AND LOCAL POPULATIONS

Fighting between the local population and soldiers from nearby military units is a common phenomenon in many countries. The USSR is no exception: "There was not a single village where the local population did not fight with the soldiers. They take sticks, we take belts." But, this respondent continues, "for minorities it would be an even more acute problem, because many of them are of a different race and generally are kind of weird people. Many people in some villages where I was stationed [central Russia] had never seen a Kazakh or an Uzbek before." Russians encounter a certain, although different, kind of hostility from the local Russians. A Latvian respondent who left the service only recently recalls:

In the central part of Russia the mass of people are uneducated, so very often they don't know where Latvia is located. Is it in the Soviet Union, or abroad? They asked us what kind of money we have, heard us speaking a different language, and could not understand why these people should be so different, and how it was that they could live in another republic. This happened often. They looked at us as strange creatures, who come from somewhere where the Baltic is, and who call themselves Latvians.

Nearly all respondents agreed that the life of a minority soldier, especially if he is dark-skinned, is made more difficult because of poor relations with the ethnically different populations living near his unit:

In the Russian areas, the local population regarded our Uzbeks and Kazakhs as bad soldiers and called them *chuchmeks*.

If you are a Turkman or Uzbek soldier and come to a Russian city or to the Ukraine, the attitude toward you would be bad and you would feel it strongly. Such an attitude has been in existence for many years.

The attitude of the local population toward soldiers of a different nationality always was strange. They are aliens to the local inhabitants. I cannot think of any girl who would have an affair with an Asian.

Other respondents echoed these observations, noting that the same kind of racial discrimination that operates in the ranks operates as well between Central Asian and Caucasian soldiers (usually excepting Georgians and Armenians) and the Slavic populations among whom most serve. "Concerning the Adygei," noted the respondent who served with them in a paratroop regiment near Tula, "the local population did not see them. The Adygei did not dare to come to the dancing parties. They were afraid to speak to Russian women, because they feared being beaten by the locals." A Russian who had served on the Sino-Soviet border in the late 1960s and early 1970s recalls that the attitude of the local Russian population toward the minorities in service there changed negatively, as Soviet-Chinese hostility intensified. Similarly, the Slavic soldiers began to take a more hostile view of the dark-skinned, local non-Russians: "When the soldiers saw yellow skin, something darker than a white face, they used to say, 'Who are you? Maybe you're a Chinese.' It was a very bad attitude." This would appear to be the pattern wherever dark-skinned non-Russians served in Russian- or Slavic-dominated locales.

Similarly, Slavic soldiers often encounter hostility from the ethnically different populations of the non-Slavic areas. For example:

Conflicts between the local population and the soldiers occurred very often. We were warned not to go into that part of town where the factory was located, because the majority of the population there was Crimean Tatars, who were anti-Soviet. If they see a Soviet officer dating a Tatar girl, or if the Uzbeks there see one dating an Uzbek girl, three or four of them will attack the officer. There were some very severe fights between the local population and soldiers on leave.

Frequently, Slavic soldiers serving in Central Asia or the Caucasus are not permitted to visit the population centers of the region, even on leave. Several soldiers recalled serving within 15 miles of Tashkent for several years without ever being permitted to visit that city.

Several respondents recalled that in the Western Ukraine "the locals hated all the people in the army. Whenever there was interaction with the locals, it always ended up in a fight. They despised the Russians and the Russians hated them." Western Ukrainians are described by many respondents as "fierce nationalists," who refuse to speak Russian with soldiers for any reason. Young officers who had served in this area reported never having left their barracks and avoiding all contact with the local population.

According to former servicemen who served there, the populations of the Baltic states express open and strong hostility toward all non-Baltic servicemen. Several noted that they had been instructed by their superiors to avoid walking at night off the base for fear of attack by local gangs. But for the most part, Balts openly treat Slavic soldiers with disdain and contempt, which members of our sample were quick to notice. A Russian officer born and raised in Riga explains:

If a Russian officer serves in Riga, he would never go to a restaurant or to a bar in military uniform. A local girl will never dance with a Russian officer and you are better off staying in the barracks because you may get beaten up by the locals.

Another Russian officer made similar observations:

I never saw such unpleasant relationships with soldiers as in Latvia. In Riga, they call Soviet soldiers "green frogs," because the uniform is green and the soldier looks like a wind-up toy—tell him something and he jumps. In Latvia, in general, they don't like soldiers. . . . Latvians look on the army as a Russian army.

Other respondents recall entering shops in the Baltic states where no one would speak to them in Russian, although it was clear that the shopkeeper had the ability to do so.

Although many respondents cited personal safety as the reason for avoiding contact with ethnically different local populations, a former Border Forces soldier stated that the hostile attitude toward the local population was deliberately cultivated in his unit. Among others, the political officer of his unit lectured about the animosity of the local population toward the soldiers and about its unreliability and its treasonous intentions toward the Soviet regime. Our respondent believed that this was done in order to provoke the Border Forces soldiers to shoot local inhabitants without hesitation should the latter encroach on forbidden borderland territory.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Although we are quick to repeat that using extended émigré interviews as an information source does not yield the kinds of "hard" data preferred by many social scientists, nevertheless we are persuaded that the interviews have resulted in unusually rich and accurate "soft" data. We do not seek statistical precision at this stage; indeed, we doubt if standard survey instruments are appropriate for this kind of preliminary study. Our objective from the beginning was to identify the military problems the Soviet leadership could face as a result of the complex ethnic composition of the Soviet population. Our work is meant to be suggestive and descriptive, not definitive. We are confident that the émigré interview method we used is adequate to attain this objective, and we are equally confident that the current trends described by our respondents will stand up to closer scrutiny when and if better information sources are found. As we noted earlier, routine content analysis of Soviet media is insufficient by itself to conduct this kind of research.

From our study, there can be no question that the increasing number of non-Slavic recruits poses a potentially serious problem to the Soviet leadership. Neither recruitment policies, stationing practices, in-service education and training procedures, nor language policies can be said to be effectively promoting the avowed Soviet goal of fielding a military force with any meaningful degree of ethnic integration. In fact, one might inquire whether the Soviet military really is intended to function in this fashion, inasmuch as so much evidence suggests that existing policies and practices openly serve to segregate ethnic groups in the military and to tolerate, if not create, conditions that exacerbate relations between members of different ethnic groups. Evidence is far too sparse to warrant the conclusion that there may be some purpose behind this apparent contradiction. Still, we believe that future research at least should confront the question: Is it possible that the Soviet armed forces are by design intended to keep existing differences between members of various ethnic groups and between entire nationalities intact, rather than the opposite?

In all societies, problems created or compounded by military service and their solutions are likely to be found in nonmilitary life. The Soviet Union is no exception. The treatment of non-Slavs in the military is part of a much larger policy designed to assure Russian domination at all levels of Soviet society. The military-related problems described in this study are unlikely to be solved or ameliorated without a more comprehensive reevaluation and change in Soviet nationality policy in general.

Our findings can be summarized as follows:

Recruitment

- Recruitment policies are designed to provide the proper ethnic balance in various services, branches, and individual units.
- Supply and demand are matched through the interaction of two recruitment subsystems: the *voenkomat* (draft board) and the *pokupatel'* (military buyer).
- Bribery for preferred assignments and deferments is widespread.

Stationing

- Extraterritorial stationing—stationing non-Russian recruits away from their national territories—is current policy.
- No national units exist at this time.

Ethnic composition of units

- High-technology services are mainly Slavic.
- Construction and support units are mainly non-Slavic.
- Border Forces are primarily Slavic.
- MVD troops are perhaps as much as 50-percent non-Slavic (primarily Central Asian and other Muslims).
- East Ukrainians are dramatically overrepresented in the permanent NCO corps.
- The officer corps is overwhelmingly Slavic- and Russian-dominated.

Education and training

- Premilitary training is less intensive in many non-Slavic regions.
- Most construction unit soldiers receive little or no individual weapons or unit instruction.
- Despite some "affirmative action"-type programs, only a few non-Slavs opt for military academies and officer training.
- Advanced in-service training is only available, with few exceptions, to non-Russians with a command of the Russian language.

Language

- No in-service Russian language training for non-Russians has been observed.
- Many non-Russians acquire an ability to function in basic Russian after approximately one year's service.
- Authorities cannot control the use of non-Russian languages outside of formation.
- Dissimulation is widespread.

Ethnic relations

- Relations between "Europeans" and "Asians" is characterized by racial discrimination by the former toward the latter.
- Individual nationalities tend to band together for support.
- Open violent conflict between Slavs and non-Slavs is not uncommon.
- Conflict between non-Slavs exists but is less prevalent than that between Slavs and non-Slavs.
- Authorities are reluctant to intervene in ethnic-related conflict.

The Soviet armed forces cannot be considered as an environment conducive to the reduction of ethnic self-awareness and a decreased animosity and tension between Soviet nationalities. Nearly all indicators suggest that precisely the opposite occurs: The ethnic self-awareness of individual soldiers is enhanced while serving in the armed forces. For those soldiers who bring a well-developed national identity to the military with them—as would appear to be the case with most Balts, Western Ukrainians, Georgians, and Armenians—the inherent structure and function of the Soviet military and the behavior of its authorities in no sense reduces these soldiers' ethnic awareness nor impedes their more national feelings. Other recruits, such as Central Asians, Azerbaidzhanis, and peoples of the Soviet Far East, who are likely to enter service with less well-articulated notions of their own ethnic distinctiveness or negative feelings toward the dominant Russians, quickly find support for both sentiments in the treatment they receive at the hands of Slavic officers and NCOs, in the menial jobs to which they are assigned, and in the prevalent racial discrimination to which they are subjected openly.

Although the Soviet armed forces should be viewed as nothing less than a formidable

military machine, still ethnic problems suggest existing or potential vulnerabilities that should receive the attention of U.S. military planners. For example, based on the evidence contained in this study, we can postulate the likelihood of support force reliability shortcomings, basic training inadequacies, and individual training deficiencies among a sizable part of the Soviet armed forces. Over the long term, unit training weaknesses may become evident, as might the lesser ability of non-Slavic-, non-Russian-speaking soldiers to master modern weaponry and associated technology. As a result of the shifting demographic balance, which will result in relatively more non-Slavs becoming eligible for conscription in the next 20 years, the Soviets could face limitations on force size, assuming that current manning and stationing practices remain in effect. Moreover, the specter of heightened internal security dilemmas cannot be ruled out.

Military planners should also consider the potential combat-related vulnerabilities that could result from the ethnic problems described in this report. For example, large-scale defections, of the type the Soviet armed forces experienced during World War II,¹ are a real possibility under conditions of protracted warfare and serious military reversals. If manning practices remain unchanged, Soviet forces will almost certainly sustain high combat losses to the Russian and other Slavic personnel in service during the initial stages of an armed conflict. Moreover, there are strong indications that Soviet forces could suffer severe "second battle" weaknesses from having to replace early casualties to Russian and Slavic forces with undertrained non-Slavic soldiers.

Finally, we can envisage combat-related scenarios in which ethnic or racial riots, minority conflicts with local populations, or even mutiny based on ethnic grievances could become real possibilities.

Ethnic problems in the Soviet armed forces should not be overestimated on the basis of this report, which in many ways is a first attempt to understand the dimensions of the ethnic factor for the Soviet military. Neither should the problems be underestimated, for it is clear from our evidence that Soviet military and nonmilitary authorities face a formidable challenge in the coming years to integrate non-Slavic personnel into the military positions of combat and technological responsibility as the number of available Slavic personnel drops off dramatically. Importantly, we can identify no remedial measures taken by the Soviet leadership to alleviate the problems noted in this report at the present time. However, there are several viable alternatives open to the Soviet authorities, should they decide to tackle this problem.²

Still, as noted in this and other volumes in this series, the current patterns of treatment of non-Slavic Soviet soldiers are not products of recent times, but rather reflect Soviet historical experience and regime objectives and are unlikely to change quickly. The attitudes of non-Slavic servicemen toward the dominant Slavic Russian majority are even less likely to undergo a radical change in the short term.

¹For more on this topic, see Alex Alexiev, *Soviet Nationalities in German Wartime Strategy, 1941-1945*, The Rand Corporation, R-2772/1, forthcoming.

²For a discussion of these alternatives, see Glenn A. Gotz and Richard E. Stanton, *Options for Reducing the Demand for Slavic Recruits in the Soviet Armed Forces*, The Rand Corporation, N-1779/1, forthcoming.